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"HOW IS THE GREAT MOGUL?"

For Her Dear Sake; or, Saved From Himself.

BY SARA CLAXTON.

CHAPTER I.

DESPERATE.

"CONFOUND it! Was ever fellow in worse strait?"

The speaker was a good-looking man, of between twenty-five and thirty, attired in a morning suit of gray tweed.

In one hand he held two or three letters just arrived; the other was

irritably pulling at his long, silky mustache, as he paced a gravel path almost hidden from a small, picturesque, rose-covered cottage, by a high hawthorn hedge.

From the expression of his face, his correspondence was of no pleasurable nature. His brows were knit, a dark shadow rested on his features, while ejaculations of perplexity and annoyance burst from his lips.

Finally, crushing all the letters, save one, into his coat pocket, he, halting for the third time, perused that he yet held. The contents were brief, but cruelly to the point.

In a writing as hard as the writer's heart, it demanded instant payment of a certain sum, lent at high interest by Jonas Moss, to Charles Somerset, or his arrest would follow as a natural consequence with Jonas Moss, money-lender.

"The money must be got somehow," muttered Charles Somerset. "The question is, how? Jonas Moss never went from his word yet. Fancy"—and his eyes glanced through the hawthorn hedge, over the green little lawn, to the cottage—"having the tiny, pretty home Laura is so proud of sold over her head, and I arrested before her eyes! Oh, it's impossible! The money *must* be got!" And with an angry stamp, he renewed his pacing. "That a man should be so put to it for a few hundreds! Why, a few hundreds would, at the present, be like an immense fortune to me! If I could only bridge over one little month, I should be safe! Laura would never know my troubles. Her home would not be desecrated by the broker's presence, and she would still believe herself the happiest woman in the world. And better, her faith in me would remain unshaken."

The speaker paused, then proceeded, angrily, "What an idiot I am! What successful result ever came from an 'if'! Wiser to think what means I can pursue, and not lose time. One thing is certain—Jonas Moss will not. I can't see any way but to go to town. I'd sooner brave it out there than here, before poor Laura. Besides, something might turn up in London by which I could get the money. I would not shrink at a trifle. What man, driven to desperation, would? By Heaven! I *am* desperate; and it would not be the first time I had done a desperate deed."

Again he halted, but now, with an effort, masked the trouble on his features by an expression of well-acted placidity—for a young girl had appeared under the rose-festooned veranda, and was calling him.

"What a pretty little darling she is!" thought Charles Somerset, as he watched her from his concealment. "Fancy giving her up! Imagine not sacrificing—risking everything for her sake!"

Few men but would have been of a similar opinion. Neither classically nor perfectly beautiful, Laura Somerset had that graceful, subtle charm about her—that indefinable something appertaining to real, pure womanhood—which wins not only the love, but the devotion, of the opposite sex.

Her complexion was that of perfect health, and brilliant as a delicate painting on ivory. Large, trustful, innocent gray eyes looked forth from beneath long, nut-brown lashes; while hair of the same brown hue, and thick and abundant, fell in plaits and waves about her snowy throat, encircled by a plain linen collar fastened by a bow of dark blue ribbon.

"Why, Charlie, where have you been hiding yourself?" she exclaimed, as, he having appeared at the opening in the hedge, she came toward him, her straw hat in her hand, and her crisp, clean cotton dress making a whisk-whisk as it touched the short grass. "I saw you meet the postman; then you vanished; and I wanted to ask you something."

"What is it, Laura?" he rejoined, making a successful effort to smile down at her as she clasped her white hands over his arms.

"A favor."

"I echo my question, love?"

"That you will take me into Eddenham to-day, dear," answered Laura. "Do you remember?"—(and she came closer to him)—"in less than a fortnight will be the anniversary, Charlie, of our wedding-day?"

"Our wedding-day!" he repeated, putting his arm round the slim waist. "Can the anniversary be so near? How swiftly time has passed! What a wedding-day it was!"

"None could have been happier, dear," she smiled up at him. "My wedding-dress was not of silk; I wore a bonnet instead of a veil; the old pew-opener was my bridesmaid; and the clerk gave me away. But do you think either of those trifles made me less happy, you foolish fellow?"

"You are a contented little beauty, Laura."

"Contented! That's hardly difficult," she laughed, gaily, "when I consider myself the most-to-be-envied wife in the world."

Charles Somerset stifled a sigh, and kept back the cloud he felt stealing over his countenance.

"Oh, if she but knew!" he thought.

But Laura knew nothing, except her own sweet wifehood, and continued, "I shall never forget the last day I spent at Lady Buchanan's, when I closed the lesson-book for the last time—saw the slates put away upon which no hand of mine would trace further sums—when I said good-by to my little charges, and took a final glance at the old, dull school-room! I felt such great delight that I nearly cried with my effort to suppress it. Then, when I awoke the next morning in the village inn, and saw the sun shining as it does now, and knew that it was my wedding-day—that before many hours I should no longer be alone in the world, but have you, so noble and good, to love and care for me!"

The recollections rather overcame the tender little wife. She leaned her head against her husband's shoulder, and her gray eyes swam with tears.

"It was, indeed, a happy, rapturous time, pet!" he answered, rather gravely. "But do you know, Laura, that, looking back at it, I often wonder whether I was not rather your enemy than your friend—whether I was not a villain!"

"You? Charlie, you are mad!" and the wondering eyes met his. "You my enemy; you anything but the best, the noblest, the kindest of husbands! How grave, dear, you look! What can you mean?"

"Neither more nor less than, considering my position—that of an almost penniless man, without a profession—was I right to ask you to share my home, its troubles, difficulties—"

"And delights!" she interrupted. "What would trouble or difficulty be to me, Charlie, if I shared it with you? And, what troubles or difficulties have there been in these twelve months in comparison with its pleasures? Our home is small and simple. Hardships, I do not doubt, are worse for you to bear than for me; yet you have, I am sure, been happy."

"As a summer day, Laura," he answered; yet reflecting that summer days sometimes ended in storms, as he recalled the letter from Jonas Moss in his pocket, requesting payment of that bill by the means of which the cottage and happy home had been maintained.

"I thought so," she smiled, delightedly; "and I was more than happy—being content, possessing your love."

"There is no doubt as to that possession, Laura," he remarked, with half a sigh. "The truth is, darling, I've been too happy, and your society too fascinating; I've been an idiot, a lotus-eater, dreaming my life away in the present. Instead, I ought to have put my shoulder to the wheel at once, and set resolutely to work; I ought not to have lost a moment."

"I am sure you did not, Charlie. There, sir, I will not hear you malign yourself. You own you are my property, therefore, I regard your self-aspersions as a personal insult. You know you *did* try for employment; but times were so bad—"

"And I so lacking energy," he smiled.

"Silence, Charlie! Lacking energy, indeed! Why, you didn't leave a stone unturned; and see, now—"

"After nearly a twelvemonth, I have, in a month's time, the promise of a clerkship, commencing at a hundred a-year."

"A fortune!"

"Of a beggar," he laughed.

"I think it one when I have you, Charlie."

"You are a kind little pet," he answered, kissing her with emotion. "But, just for the sake of supposition—for, you know, there is often a slip 'twixt cup and lip—suppose this clerkship promised should, after all, fall through; suppose we were almost—almost penniless, Laura; that we had to give up the cottage, and live yet more humbly?"

She looked up a little startled, alarmed; but more for his sake than her own. Was there

any thing in his words deeper than supposition?

The mask he compelled himself to wear deceived her. Smiling, she put her arms round his neck, and sung the final lines of one of Lover's most charming ballads:

"So thou wert spared,
I'd bless the morrow,
In want and sorrow
That left me you."

We would work together, dear; I would work with—or, if necessary, for you. The future has but one terror for me—that is, separation."

"That settles it!" exclaimed Charles Somerset, decisively; and, as Laura thought, rather irrelevantly.

But before she could inquire what was settled, her husband went on:

"Yes, dear, we'll go to Eddenham to-day; but I shall have to let you come home alone, for the truth is my letters this morning were important business ones, and I must run up to London for a day or two."

A shadow fell over the wife's face.

It was but transient.

During that twelvemonth of married happiness Charles Somerset had had frequently to "run up to London" for indefinite periods, on "important business."

"You will not be long gone, Charlie?" she queried, wistfully.

"No, pet; perhaps not more than a day or two."

"Then you will be certain to be back before our wedding-day?"

"Of course, darling!" he laughed, shuddering internally, as he heard the rustle of Jonas Moss's letter in his pocket. "I'd run down for that if I had to go back to town the next morning. It's only a bit of business I must get settled before I buckle hard to work at my clerkship. I shall not get any chance, you know, of visiting town then."

"No; I fancy not," laughed Laura. "There, you naughty boy, I suppose I must grant you leave of absence this once."

"And, in return, I will grant that favor about taking you to Eddenham. So, love, go dress, and I can smoke a cigar while waiting for you."

Laura Somerset, not even the shadow of a cloud upon her heart, ran back over the lawn to the cottage.

Her husband looked after her, then turned away with a sigh.

"No; Laura has decided it," he repeated, lighting a cigar. "She work? I'd die sooner! Yet—yet, confound it! if I do not satisfy Moss, might it not come to that, and separation? Idiot that I was not to have obtained a situation directly I married! Now, let me bridge over only this month, and I'll stick to my desk like a limpet. But this money must be got for Laura's sake; it *shall* be, at any risk—at any cost!"

Some six hours after the above, Charles Somerset issued from Mr. Jonas Moss's office, situated in a dull, bygone street, in Bloomsbury.

Unconsciously he was buttoning his coat across his chest, like a desperate man, or as one does when about to face a moment of peril.

He had been trying to mollify the usurer's heart, to gain a little time, and had failed.

"That's over!" he muttered between his teeth. "I never thought the result would be different. I've promised him the money within three days, and he shall have it! Heavens, at what a price!"

Rapidly he made his way into the Strand.

The crowd of people confused, irritated him.

He could not maintain the clearness of brain that was at the time so necessary to him.

"I'll follow my old plan," he repeated. "I'll take a boat up the river. A man can at least, be alone and quiet there. And," he added, "may fortune show me some way of escape out of my grievous difficulty before morning. Whatever it be, I swear I will accept it!"

An hour later he was rowing slowly upon the broad bosom of the Thames.

CHAPTER II.

DOWN BY THE BOAT-HOUSE.

PARKLAWN HOUSE was a charming estate on the banks of the Thames, a little this side Richmond. The house was square, spacious, and handsome. The grounds well wooded, tastefully laid out, and extensive.

From the fine stone terrace, with its statues, and vases full of bright flowers, a smooth, velvety lawn swept down almost to the silver river. A few ancient trees grew upon it, casting a pleasant shade; while, in the center, a marble fountain conversed sweetly with its soft-falling diamond sprays of crystal water.

At the verge of the river trees clustered thickly at each side, so as not to spoil the view from the drawing-room windows; while a narrow path ran under the willows, along the water's edge, to a picturesque boat-house, nestling among a group of bushes, to which the river at high tide almost reached.

Pleasure-seekers pausing on their oars, struck by the beauty of the trim, perfect little estate, rarely saw the lawn or paths enlivened by human forms.

Parties were seldom given, the music of children's voices never heard.

When persons were seen, it was either the bent form of an elderly, gray-haired gentleman, or the slim figure of a young, graceful girl.

These, save the servants of the household, were the only dwellers in Parklawn.

The gentleman was the owner of the estate—Mr. Matthew Lorrimore; the girl his adopted daughter, Rosalind.

All through life fortune had, save in one instance, been kind to Matthew Lorrimore. At the age of five-and-fifty he had been able to retire on a handsome fortune.

That one instance when matters had not gone well with him was in his love.

When about eight-and-twenty, he had seen and become desperately enamored of a Miss Rose Pierrepont.

His passion, however, was doomed to disappointment, the young lady being already engaged to a friend of his own.

But his affection did not lessen on that account; it only changed in character. He was a sincere friend to the husband and wife during their short lives, and on their death adopted their only child, Rosalind, bringing her up as his own; for, true to his first love, he had never again contemplated marriage.

His own family consisted but of two nephews—one, George, the son of an elder brother, whom he, Matthew, had not liked; the other, Barry, the son of a younger, to whom he had been exceedingly attached.

The dearest being to him in the world, however, was Rosalind; yet the feeling of kinship was sufficiently strong in him to make him loth to will his property from his own kind. To surmount this difficulty, he had early announced that Barry should be his heir, on condition that he married Rosalind.

With that idea the two young people had been brought up together, their engagement tacitly understood, though little or no love-making passed between them—a circumstance that apparently was not considered a hardship by either the lady or gentleman.

Matthew Lorrimore, however, as years stole on him, thought more seriously of the matter than they evidently did. He learned that Barry, upon the liberal income he allowed him as his probable heir, was leading far too pleasant a life in town to care very soon to settle.

The uncle reasoned, argued, but was ever met by the same remark—that, surely, there was time enough. Rosalind, Barry was certain, was in no more hurry than he to wed.

Habitual success in the world had made Matthew Lorrimore arbitrary and self-willed.

After one or two similar excuses, he determined to bring his nephew to book the best way he could. He stopped his income.

Barry Lorrimore acted the indignant. He refused to visit Parklawn.

Matthew Lorrimore laughed as he locked away his check-book. He guessed how long the indignation of a young fellow would last who, after an allowance of three hundred a year, was reduced to nothing.

"He must in the end come back," he chuckled. "Barry isn't an idiot. He is proud; but he is extravagant, and likes money."

The old man was right; but Barry was so long in coming back that he began to dread he had been wrong in his calculations.

Urged by that dread, he caused his solicitor, in the coldest and most legal style, to inform his stubborn nephew that his uncle, Matthew Lorrimore, not being of a disposition to be trifled with, and having no desire to sacrifice Miss Rosalind Acland's youth in waiting the caprice of so cool a lover, was about making a new will. Before doing so he gave Barry a last chance, for his dead father's sake. Either, within a week, he must not only put in an appearance at Parklawn, but be ready to propose to Rosalind and have the day fixed for their speedy union, or be prepared to be utterly disinherited.

"That will bring him!" chuckled the old man. "Living a bachelor upon nothing can't be quite so pleasant as marriage with a pretty, good little wife and six hundred a year."

The week given to Barry was not yet over; in fact, not three days of it had gone by when, just as the butler announced dinner, a fly was heard to drive up to the entrance of Parklawn, and, a few minutes after, Barry Lorrimore was ushered in.

His uncle's keen gray eyes glistened as they rested on him. It is a pleasant thing to feel that we have power with those whom we would govern. He was, however, wise enough not to show his triumph, but, extending his hand, greeted the young fellow cordially.

"How are you, Barry?" he said, as if they had met but a few days back. "Just in time for dinner."

"I must apologize for being so late, uncle," answered the nephew; "but I was unexpectedly detained in town, and thought no time would be better to talk over matters"—dropping his voice—"than after dinner."

"True—true, Barry. Is this to be one of your flying visits, eh?"

"No, sir," smiled the nephew, as he turned to Rosalind. "I have taken the liberty of bringing my portmanteau, if you will give me hospitality for a week."

"Ay; for a fortnight!" responded Matthew Lorrimore, fondly. "Except, I suppose, for a bit of tidying up, your room's just as you left it, isn't it, Rosie?"

"Yes, uncle," answered the girl, her golden lashes drooping over her violet eyes, as the new-comer took her hand.

"No, no!" laughed the old man. "We will not drive him away now we have got him, Rosie, will we?"

"Barry knows, dear uncle, that there is always a sincere welcome for him at Parklawn."

"A thousand thanks, dear Rosalind, for so kind, and, I fear, so ill-deserved a reception!" said Barry Lorrimore, with feeling, as he pressed the girl's slender fingers to his lips. "But you look pale—are you not well?"

"She hasn't been well. And what wonder, Master Barry?"

"Indeed, it is nothing. For the last day or two I have had a headache, that is all," responded Rosalind Acland, a flush rising to her smooth cheek, an expression half of annoyance, half pain, in her veiled eyes. "Uncle, you forget that Dyson has announced dinner. If we stay longer it will be spoiled, and your hospitality to Barry will be a cold one. Come!"

And, slipping her hand on the old man's arm, she led him away, leaving the younger to follow alone.

"What, Rosie taking January, when May is by?" laughed Matthew Lorrimore. "Master Barry,"—looking back—"you have only yourself to thank for it."

"I bow, sir, to my punishment," remarked the young man, who, however, during the dinner, when unobserved, read Rosalind Acland's countenance attentively.

"Does she really care for me?" he reflected. "I'd lay a cool hundred to one that she doesn't. There is more in the heart beneath than her looks will let be known. Yet she does not say 'No' to our union. Does she yield only as a duty to the wish of her benefactor? Or is it to become the mistress of Parklawn, with the prospective three thousand a year?"

The question could not be answered then; for Matthew Lorrimore was in such high spirits at the promised success of the great desire of his life, that he gave little time for his companions to eat, much less to think.

Soon after the dessert was placed, Rosalind Acland rose to withdraw.

As Barry advanced to open the door, Matthew Lorrimore said, "Do not wait coffee for us this evening, pet. Barry and I may have much to speak about. Then I shall want my nap."

"Very well, uncle." It was by his wish she so called him. "I or Barry can ring for it when you come in."

Then she passed out.

The young man glanced after her.

"She is very sweet, and very pretty," he reflected. "Yes, I feel that the step I am about to take is the right one."

Then he closed the door, returned to the table, and took his seat opposite his uncle.

A pause ensued. A silence reigned.

The young man and the old had, curiously enough, taken something of the same attitude, making the likeness between them yet more striking than it was ordinarily.

Both had the same well-shaped features, the same square-cut chin, the same clean-shaved face. The one might have been the son of the other.

Matthew Lorrimore was the first to break the silence. Filling his glass, and passing the decanter, he said, "Well, Barry, you had my letter—or, rather, Cooke's?"

"Yes, sir; or I should not now, probably, be here."

"And your decision?"

The young man hesitated a second. His eyes were fixed on the ruby wine in his glass, then he replied, "Can you doubt, uncle? I consent, of course."

"You mean it, Barry?" exclaimed the old man, leaning forward. "You like Rosalind?"

"We say we like people, sir, whom we but meet as friends," said the nephew. "Rosalind and I have, from children, been brought up together. She is gentle, pretty, and good. I love her, and would do much to save her from pain."

"Barry, you delight me!" cried Matthew Lorrimore, extending his hand. "I shall telegraph to Cooke that he will not be wanted here, except to draw up the marriage settlements. You are Rosalind's future husband, and my heir now. Only one thing remains—the date of the wedding."

"That, sir, I must leave to the lady."

"Tut, tut! Better leave it to me, Barry; girls think it looks well to appear squeamish, and in no haste; though Rosalind is of your sensible sort."

"Then, uncle, you do not imagine she has any objection to me?" inquired the nephew.

"Objection to you?—nonsense! Listen, Barry! There are three reasons why she should not. First, because she owes everything to me, and this wedding is my wish. Secondly, it will make her mistress of Parklawn, and three thousand a year at my death. Thirdly, look in the glass, you young coxcomb—look in the glass!"

"Thanks, uncle for the compliment!" laughed Barry. "But, in the latter respect, many men would be quite my equal; my cousin George, for instance."

"Your cousin George!" ejaculated the old man, with a deep frown. "Listen to me, Barry. If Rosalind had dared to love him in—"

stead of you, it should have been ruin to both. I allow him, as I allowed you, three hundred a year; not because I like him—I don't—I—I—Well, I hated his father, though he was my brother—but just because the world shouldn't talk, and bring up stories of past family enmity. Well, that allowance I'd stop, and I'd shut the door of Parklawn upon Rosalind, with just the clothes she stood upright in, if they thwarted me. But there! what use of getting excited over such an absurdity? George has been here but once during your absence. I fancy he dislikes coming to Parklawn as much as I dislike his doing so. Rosalind loves you, Barry. Don't doubt that. She has quite worn herself out with anxiety and suspense since she heard it was possible you were coming back. If you doubt me, ask her yourself. Go and ask her now, while I take my nap."

Barry Lorrimore placed his hand on the back of his chair, as if about to rise and fulfill the suggestion; but he hesitated.

Whether his uncle noticed it, or whether he only suddenly remembered, he exclaimed, "Stay, Barry, a second. You say you have come here to marry Rosalind? Good! Had you refused, you would never, with my permission, have entered Parklawn again!"

"I should not, sir, without your permission, have attempted to. Though, uncle, you have reared me from childhood under the belief that my fortune was assured as your heir, you have every right to dispose of your fortune as you please."

"Of course I have; and this is how I dispose of six hundred pounds of it," remarked Matthew Lorrimore, as, taking out his pocket-book, he drew from it, and handed to his companion, a check filled in for that amount.

"Six hundred pounds!" cried the young man, rising quickly to his feet, much agitated. "Do you—can you really mean this for me?"

"Every penny! As I should have cut you off with a shilling, or without it, had you not complied with my wishes, I determined to give you that for a present if you did."

"Uncle, you are too kind—too generous!" exclaimed Barry, much moved, as he pressed the old man's hand. "I don't know how to take it! I don't deserve it!"

"Tut, tut! Since when have you been so delicate in receiving checks? Didn't I cut off supplies, and do you mean to tell me, Barry, you have been living without getting into debt? Nonsense!"

"That is true, uncle."

"Here, then, pay them; and, if there's any surplus, buy something pretty for Rosalind."

"I am very much obliged to you, uncle. You have always thought well of me. I would risk and suffer much rather than you should cease to do so."

"That's right—that's right! Now, lad, go to Rosalind, while I take my nap."

"If, uncle, you have no objection, I'd rather take a turn in the grounds first, and smoke a cigar. Your unexpected generosity, and" (with a nervous laugh) "the Burgundy, have a little overcome me."

"And you would rather appear at your best when you next see Rosie, eh?" chuckled Matthew Lorrimore. "Very well. I'll join you at coffee. By the way, I remember your favorite smoking place used to be the boat-house, Barry."

"Yes, uncle; the softly murmuring river aids to the soothing effect of the cigar."

"Possibly; but don't get the boat out."

"I'm not likely to do that; but why not?"

"Because since the heavy rains the tide goes like a mill-race, and France tells me the reeds and weeds are awfully dangerous. They must be cleared."

"There's no danger, uncle, for me. I sha'n't care for a row to night. In half an hour I'll be in the drawing-room with you."

Saying which, Barry Lorrimore left the room, put on his hat and overcoat, and, by a side conservatory door, entered the grounds.

Though the moon was not visible, its presence behind the clouds made the night of a

silvery gray. Waiting but to light a cigar, Barry struck at once across the lawn to the river. As his uncle had said, the boat-house had always been a favorite retreat of his, and perhaps it was habit that made him bend his steps there now.

Certainly, with arms crossed, and head bowed in thought, he seemed unconscious in which direction his feet were taking him.

Reaching the path by the river, he halted, and raised his head. At the same instant the moon sent a ray of light upon the waters.

The tide was at the ebb, and the river, as Matthew Lorrimore had said, was somewhat like a mill-race. Its appearance was turbid, and the waters rushed by in whirling eddies.

"I wonder it hasn't overflowed the banks," thought Barry, turning his steps to the boat-house.

There he sat down on an iron garden seat placed under the trees, and his elbows on his knees, his chin on his hands, smoked, and meditatively regarded the rushing tide.

Suddenly tossing his half-finished cigar on the grass, he took out the check, and contemplated it.

"No, it isn't crossed," he muttered; "I'm glad of that. For six hundred pounds, and Uncle Lorrimore can give it so lightly! Why, to some poor fellows it would be a fortune!"

He turned his head quickly, believing that he had heard a rustle in the bushes behind him. Carefully he peered among them. No; there was nothing.

"The wind, or some night bird, I suppose," thought Barry, as he restored the check to his pocket-book.

CHAPTER III.

MORE THAN A QUARREL—A CRIME.

WHEN Rosalind Acland had quitted the dining-room, the quiet repose of her manner underwent a rapid change. Her face grew full of purpose, her light step rapid.

Reaching the drawing-room, she rung, and gave orders respecting coffee; adding, "Should I not be here when my uncle and Mr. Barry ring, and they inquire for me, say merely that I complained of headache."

Then, when alone, she took a black lace shawl from a chair, threw it about her head and shoulders, and passed through the French windows into the grounds.

After one cautious glance around, she descended the terrace, and proceeded swiftly toward the most wooded part of the estate.

Art had so arranged the trees, that the grounds were made to appear larger than they really were, by concealing the Parklawn boundaries with masses of foliage.

Under the shadows of the latter Rosalind hastened, in fact, ran almost, until the hedge separating Parklawn from a lane leading down to the Thames was reached.

Here she paused, breathless; her head inclined, listening; her hand pressed to her side.

In less than two minutes, three bars of a popular ballad were softly whistled at the other side.

The girl's eyes brightened. Taking a step nearer the hedge, she whispered, "George!"

No answer came; only a sound as of some one scrambling over the hedge. Then there was a rustle among the branches of a large tree, and a man, a second after, dropped onto the path in front.

"Rosalind, my darling!" he exclaimed, as he hastened toward her.

He seemed as if he would have taken her in his arms, but the girl, drawing back, placed her hand in his.

"I feared," she murmured, "that you would have been tired of waiting, George. Dinner was delayed, and I am late."

"Rosalind," he responded, fervently, gazing down upon her, "while there was a chance of seeing you, even but for a second, I would have waited patiently until midnight."

"How good you are!" she answered, sadly. "Yet is it not all useless?—it can but lead to greater pain!"

"Useless, Rosalind, my darling—my own, own love?" he cried, passionately. "You cannot mean it—"

"George," she interrupted, putting her little hands on his arm, and raising her eyes to his, "Barry, your cousin, has come this evening."

"Come!" he cried, his face darkening.

He was a tall, handsome man, with a clear complexion, and dark, silky, heavy beard and mustache that almost concealed the lower portion of his countenance; "and for what purpose?"

"Can you ask?" she murmured, lowering her eyes sadly.

"Do you mean, Rosalind, he has come to claim you—to purchase you? Curse him!" ejaculated George Lorrimore. "Rosalind, he cannot be so mean, so base a coward! He does not love you, while I, oh, dearest, I cannot live without you!"

He gazed passionately, eagerly upon her. The tears were on Rosalind's cheek as she answered, "George, what can we do? What is to be done? Am I not helpless? Barry tells uncle he loves me. He has come here for our marriage to be arranged."

"But you, Rosalind, will not consent? You will not permit yourself to be sold to please an old man's whim? Darling, you never could give your hand to one, loving all the while another?"

"What can I do?" cried the girl, piteously. "A dependent on Mr. Lorrimore, owing him everything! That marriage is the one desire of his heart. He tells me so daily."

"Will that make your sin to Barry less, Rosalind?"

"My sin? Oh, do not call it that!"

"Why should I not? Could any sin be greater?" he asked, bitterly.

"Yes," she responded, with sudden firmness, and steadily meeting his gaze; "the wedding one whom you love, and ruining him!"

"Ruining him, Rosalind?"

"Yes, George. Do you recollect your last visit here, when uncle came suddenly upon us in the conservatory?"

"Well, there was nothing to arouse his suspicions in that, darling?"

"But they were aroused; for after you had left, he said, 'Rosalind, my dear, it is well you love Barry—particularly well for my other nephew, George; for did he ever seek to win your affections, I am sure he should never have another shilling from me. Instead, I'd ruin him!'"

"Just because of an ill-feeling against my father," exclaimed the young man, bitterly. "For that, Barry not only comes into his wealth, but is to call you wife!"

"It is hard, George—very hard!"

"But the worst is, that she whom I love should go over to my enemies."

"George!" And the girl drew quickly away, pained, hurt. But the next moment, seeing him so wan, so full of agony, her tears flowed in pity. Dropping her face on her hands, she sobbed, "Oh, in mercy, be not cruel! Think of what I, too, have to bear!"

"Then do not bear it, love!" he cried, catching her to him. "If you will not come with me, and brave your uncle, at least gain time. In that rests everything."

"George," exclaimed Rosalind, looking up after a pause, "I will tell you what I will do. I think you are wrong in disliking Barry."

"Would not any man dislike another when he sees him gathering all the gold, while he, with as just a claim for the superior metal, has to put up with the halfpence?"

"Is that Barry's fault?"

"Ah! you plead for him, Rosalind," said George Lorrimore, indignantly. This advocacy of his beloved made his rival only the more hateful in his eyes. If Barry Lorrimore had not existed, how different might things have been!

Matthew Lorrimore had enough kinship in him to have even taken to the nephew whose father he had not liked.

"You wrong me George, and Barry, too!"

cried Rosalind, with spirit. "Barry has not a bad heart. He has for months resisted his uncle's hard authority; but finally has yielded, in the belief that I, loving him, or only liking him, have no objection to this marriage. Listen, George!" And the girl's beautiful eyes met her lover's clear and firm in the silvery gray of night. "I will trust in Barry. I will confess my love is another's—I will not say whose—and, trust me, he will refuse to wed me."

"Do you really believe that, Rosalind?" asked the other, incredulously.

"I do," she replied, firmly, "and will try him."

"Do so, love; for it is, I really believe, our only chance," he answered, moved by her manner. "If you succeed, I shall think better of Barry than I have ever done yet."

"Because, George, knowing him but little, you have been jealous of him."

"That is true, Rosalind. Jealous, first, for the favor shown him by my uncle; then for his being able to be near you while I could not."

"Which has led you to do him injustice. Believe me in that, dear."

"I will try to believe it, for your sake, Rosalind. But, until you have proved that I am in error, may Barry and I never cross each other's path!"

"Thank Heaven, there is no fear of that!" said the girl. "You return to town to-night?"

"Yes. My boat is hidden among the willows at the end of the lane."

"Then, now, George, return to it," said Rosalind. "I dare not stay longer with you, lest Barry or my uncle should come to the drawing-room. I will write to you some time tomorrow, and—and—"

"Well, Rosalind?"

"Something seems to whisper me that I shall never be Barry Lorrimore's wife."

"But mine, dearest!" he murmured, fondly, as he placed his arm round her.

"That, George, must rest in the future," she answered. "But, whatever I may be led or forced to do, my love will be always yours. Trust me, dear, that will make me as strong for your sake as for my own."

"That shall be my consolation, Rosalind, until we again meet. On Friday, at the same hour, I will be here."

"And I, George, will write before that to let you know my success with Barry. Oh, that you two were friends!"

"Uncle Lorrimore has rendered that impossible," laughed the young man, bitterly; "therefore under the circumstances, I think it well that Barry and I do not meet. So farewell, my Rosalind, until Friday!"

He held her a moment to him. A moment they stood silent beneath the trees, through which the silvery gray night peered down upon them; then tenderly, reverently, George Lorrimore kissed her forehead, murmured, "May Heaven be with us, love!" seized the low branch of the tree, swung himself over the hedge, and was gone.

A brief space Rosalind waited alone, listening to his retreating footsteps. For the first time, she felt relief in his absence—for the first time, was glad that in a few minutes he would be far from Parklawn, and with no possible chance of encountering Barry.

His words and looks had rendered her uneasy. Should those two meet, surely they would quarrel, and as surely she knew George would be the one who would be blamed. In such a case, what might not uncle Lorrimore do in his anger? Discard him, no doubt—leave him penniless, as once he had left Barry, whom he really cared for.

"Were that to happen," thought Rosalind, drawing up her pretty, slim figure with determination, "I should not be the cause of George's ruin. I could not harm him by accepting his love, and I would accept it. I would go to him, I would marry him, and we would front and fight poverty together."

Again she listened. Was that the soft splash

of oars? It might have been. Her lover must be on the water by this time.

Satisfied, her anxiety now being to reach the drawing-room before the gentlemen entered, she proceeded at a run through the trees, across the lawn, and up the steps of the terrace.

Here she paused. A glance through the lace curtains showed her the apartment was yet untenanted. Leaning against the balustrade, she waited where she was to regain her breath and let the night air cool her flushed cheek.

The scene was peaceful and still. The moon was gradually dispersing the clouds, and the girl could see its silver rays playing on the swift tide of the river between the trees.

What was that?"

Rosalind, starting, turned her head in the direction of a sudden sound which had broken the stillness.

It came, apparently, from down by the river-bank.

Was it a cry or a call?

She listened.

All was still again. Not a sound—not the slightest murmur. After a few minutes she entered the drawing-room, and threw aside her shawl. As she did so, her eyes rested on the clock. The hour was eight.

How long her uncle and Barry were in coming! They must, indeed, have had much to speak about. Supposing Barry was averse really to the marriage uncle Lorrimore desired? Supposing he was pleading—arguing against it? Oh, if only he were!

Rosalind fell into a pleasant reverie born of that hope; and the silence within and without the room for fully a quarter of an hour remained unbroken.

Then the dining-room door opened. Rosalind heard Matthew Lorrimore cross the hall alone. A second after, he entered.

"What, Rosie!" he remarked, cheerfully, "Barry not come in yet? What a fellow he is for a cigar!"

"I have not seen him, uncle. I thought he was with you."

"No; he left me quite an hour ago, saying he would have a smoke in the grounds, and be back in time to join me for coffee. Ring for it, pet. I dare say he'll be here before it is served."

But it was not so.

The coffee came, was poured out, and slowly drank, but Barry did not appear. The clock struck a quarter to nine.

"It's very curious!" remarked Matthew Lorrimore.

"You—you did not quarrel at all, did you, uncle?" questioned Rosalind, timidly, that previous thought recurring.

"Quarrel? Not a bit!" laughed the old man. "We were never better friends! Don't look so concerned, pet. Barry came"—and he drew her to him, kissing her affectionately—"to give me the greatest happiness I have to hope for in this world! He came to say he loves you, Rosalind—loves you as dearly, I trust, as I loved your mother! And this evening we three are to fix the date of your wedding!"

A shudder ran through the fair listener, but she had partly turned from the old man. He did not see that the color had dropped from her cheeks.

"When first I adopted you, Rosalind, I determined that if you acted as a daughter to me—as you have, pet—that you should be mistress of Parklawn, and to-night I know my wish is to be realized. Why, there goes nine!" he interrupted himself as again the clock struck. "Whatever can have become of Barry? He could have smoked a dozen cigars in this time! He'd never stroll about the grounds so long as this! What can be detaining him? He couldn't have met any one!"

A sudden terror fell upon Rosalind.

"Could he and his cousin have encountered each other?"

For the first time, this occurred to her as the reason of Barry's prolonged absence; and

having gained possession of her brain, she could not shake it off.

"Did Barry say, uncle," she queried, with an agitation which her companion attributed to anxiety for his nephew, "to what part of the grounds he was going?"

"Yes, pet. To his favorite old place—the boat-house down by the river. There, don't look so white; he's all right. Perhaps the boy has fallen asleep. It doesn't seem likely, but I'll send Erard to see."

He rung the bell, and the footman appearing, dispatched him on his errand.

As he went, Matthew Lorrimore, taking Rosalind's arm, stepped out onto the terrace to await the man and Barry's return.

"Would Barry return?" That was the mental question of Rosalind, as, with a chill cold about her, a dim presentiment of approaching evil, she stood, white and silent, by the old man's side.

The moon had risen high now. The clouds had floated away. Every object appeared clearly, sharply defined. The river rushed between its banks, a stream of molten silver.

"Here he comes!" exclaimed Lorrimore, as the figure of a man emerging from the trees came toward them across the lawn.

Rosalind's heart gave a great throb of relief, then fell again as her companion added, almost angrily, "No; by Heaven, it's Erard—Erard alone! What can have become of Barry?"

Then his features darkened as a suspicion flashed into his brain.

"Had Barry been deceiving him? Had he played his cards to get that check, and was he gone?"

"Pshaw!" he commented, mentally; "what are six hundred pounds to him with his tastes? What, when by next week he can make that sum his annually? Besides, would he be so mad for such a trifle to incur my lasting anger, and the future loss of Parklawn and three thousand a year? Well, Erard," he proceeded, aloud, as the footman drew near, "have you found Mr. Barry?"

"No, sir; Mr. Barry's not there, but—" began the man, with hesitation.

"Oh, Heaven!" interrupted Rosalind, with a quick cry, as her eager eyes studied the footman's countenance; "something is wrong—something has happened! I know it! Uncle—uncle, ask him what it is?"

"Nonsense, child! What could have happened?" responded the old man. But his agitation was scarcely less than hers. "Erard, have you anything to tell?"

"Only, sir, I—I think Mr. Barry has been there, but not alone. There seems to have been a struggle, sir. The path is trampled into mud, and there are marks of—"

He was checked by a cry from Rosalind, as she dropped in a swoon upon the terrace.

"Confound you!" ejaculated Matthew Lorrimore to the aghast footman; "if you dread that harm has come to my nephew, where was your sense to tell it before Miss Acland, his betrothed? You idiot, you may have killed her! Help me to carry her in!"

The scared domestic obeyed. When she had been placed on the sofa, Matthew Lorrimore rung for her own attendant, who, administering restoratives, speedily brought back signs of animation.

Perceiving this, the old man said, "Erard, fetch the stable lantern, and tell Tomson to come to me. I will go to the boat-house myself."

Soon the three were hurrying toward the river, the rays from the lantern casting a yellow light about them and making will-o'-the-wisps among the shrubs. By the boat-house the little party halted. Here the trees were more dense, and the lantern light had more power.

What did this show to the searchers?

The river bank and grasses trampled into mud, as it might be if two men had struggled fiercely there. And a small pool of red fluid, as if one of the combatants had fallen.

Lower down to the river, fragments of grass and reed, as though one had caught frantically at them for the sake of dear life.

Was that all?

No. What was this? A coral sleeve-link set in gold. And that dark object, under the garden seat, as if it had fallen or rolled there?

A billycock hat, crushed in at the crown, as with a heavy blow.

Surely there had been more than a struggle here. A man had been slain!

The three men, as they stood in the dull light of the lantern, gazing into each other's faces, had no doubt of it.

They were as certain as that the hat and coral stud were Barry Lorrimore's.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EMERALD RING.

YES, the worst crime known to the law had been committed.

As to the victim's identity, there could be no doubt of that.

But who had killed him?

Soon Parklawn was in a commotion, which by morning had spread through the neighborhood.

Not an hour, after the event, the police held possession of the place. Everywhere their lanterns flashed through the grounds, congregating chiefly, however, like so many fire-flies, in the vicinity of the boat-house.

Matthew Lorrimore's sorrow for his nephew seemed, for the time, at least, absorbed by his own disappointment and anger. He swore that money should not be spared, nor stone left unturned, to find the perpetrator of the dreadful deed, and have him punished.

Having small faith in the local police, save in their ability to make a fuss and to bungle, he had a telegram immediately sent to Scotland Yard, stating the occurrence, and a desire that a clever detective should come down to Parklawn.

In due course the detective arrived—a fair-haired, clean-shaven man, with the appearance of a retired, respectable, small tradesman, with nothing specially peculiar about him, without it was a clear, very intelligent pair of by no means large steel-gray eyes.

This individual immediately took the case, as it were, in charge; that is, he took it entirely out of the hands of the local police.

Carefully he noted down every statement; by some means got out the fact of the check for six hundred pounds Barry had had in his possession; put searching and cross questions respecting the servants; then, with a calmness that was excessively irritating to Matthew Lorrimore in his present state of excitement, took up his hat and said, "Now, if you please, sir, I'll just go and have a look at the scene of the supposed crime."

"Supposed?" repeated Matthew Lorrimore. "I don't see where a doubt can rest."

"Well, sir," remarked the detective, after a scrutiny at the inside of his hat, as if hesitating to take his companion so far into his confidence, "the English law will not fully pronounce until the body has been found."

"But if my nephew's body is sunk in the Thames?"

"We must have the river dragged."

"Still, it might not be found, considering the strong tide and swollen state of the water last night."

"That's possible. Though I suspect, Mr. Lorrimore, it would turn up somewhere between the bridges."

"If it didn't get buried and held down by the Thames mud before," muttered Matthew Lorrimore. "But supposing the body not found, would you say that no crime has been committed?"

"Not that, sir. We must prove it circumstantially. We must find out if, whether from ill-feeling or robbery, any person or persons would be likely to put your nephew out of the way."

"I don't believe he had an enemy in the

world," broke in the old man, pacing the room.

"Then rest assured, Mr. Lorrimore, it's robbery that's most likely. Some one, p'r'aps, got an inkling of the six hundred pound check. That would make the case clear; and the first thing we have to do is to find out what persons, strangers, tramps, or otherwise, were in this neighborhood last night. But the chief thing, sir—and I needn't say it to you, a gentleman and a man of the world, Mr. Lorrimore—is to keep our own counsel, especially in regard to your servants."

"You surely don't suspect them?"

"It's best, sir, in a case like this, to suspect every one; then, ten to one you hit upon the right. You say one of the windows of the dining-room was open during dinner; also, that your butler brought in a fresh bottle of Burgundy, you think, while you were talking of the money. Now that butler, sir, is one of the honestest and most respectable I've seen. Still, six hundred pounds are a great temptation. In our profession, we don't despise the most insignificant clew. Now, sir, I'll go to the boat-house."

"I'll go with you," said Matthew Lorrimore, doubtfully.

The hour was nine, early for Parklawn, but breakfast was long over; and the sun fell bright and warm upon the well-kept lawn as the two crossed it to the river.

Two policemen were at the boat-house on guard.

By the detective's orders, they renewed the search under his directions.

A cast was taken of the footprints—that is, as well as cast could be, for the trampled state of the soft mud left hardly one perfect.

Then through the bushes the men tramped, crushing down the tender shoots and green leaves.

With what result?

To the detective, a great one.

An open pocket-book, that one of the men had found lodged in the foliage of a laurel, far back among the bushes, as if flung there with some strength.

There was no doubt as to whose property it was.

In one of the pockets were three or four visiting cards, bearing the name of Barry Lorrimore. In another, some trivial notes on a half-sheet of paper in Barry Lorrimore's handwriting, and that was all!

The check that the uncle had seen his nephew, not much over fourteen hours ago, place in that pocket-book was not there.

"You are certain this is Mr. Barry Lorrimore's pocket-book, sir?" queried the detective.

"Quite; I know it as well as I do my own," replied the old man, with a quiver in his voice.

"Then, sir," exclaimed the detective, with sudden alacrity, "p'r'aps we have our man. Certainly, we are on his track."

"How do you mean? Thank Heaven, if you are!"

"Just this, sir," answered the detective, having placed the local police officer again on guard, with certain orders, and then proceeding to the house. "The fellow who's got that check will cash it the first thing this morning. We must, sir, if possible, be beforehand with him. The bank must be informed, and the fellow nabbed when he shows himself."

"We'd better telegraph," said Matthew Lorrimore.

"You do that, sir, while I shall go up to town myself. Speed is everything. All may rest upon one minute whether we get him or not. The name of your bankers, if you please, sir?"

The detective, Nathaniel Moyle, having written it down, quitted Parklawn, and was soon on his way to London.

As the hansom he chartered from the railway station dashed up the Strand some clock struck half-past ten.

"Just half an hour too late!" commented Mr. Moyle. "It depends now if the fellow's been before me or not."

His doubts were speedily most unsatisfactorily set at rest. Five minutes after he had passed through the green baize swing bank doors, he learned that he had indeed come just half an hour too late.

Hardly had the bank been opened than the check had been presented and cashed.

"By what kind of man?"

That's all that the detective could get now.

"A tall, or rather tall man, attired in a thick brown ulster, wearing a soft felt hat, pulled rather low over his brows, which, added to the dark beard and mustache he wore, nearly concealed his face."

"Did he seem excited at all?" questions Nathaniel Moyle of the cashier.

No; the cashier had not noticed anything peculiar in his manner. The man had scarcely spoken more than to ask for a certain amount in gold. The only thing the cashier did observe was that the hands with which the man had gathered up the money were white and well formed, like a gentleman's; while on the small finger of the right was a lady's ring—a half hoop of emeralds. The cashier had noticed it, as not being a ring suited to a gentleman.

Beyond this Mr. Moyle could obtain nothing.

Yet it was a clew—the description, the hands, and the ring.

"Now," reflected the detective, as, standing on the bank steps, he carefully put away his notes, "what is the next move? Well, I think I'll go back to Parklawn, and see what I can pick up there. If I can trace this man to town, I may find out his haunts, and easier follow the scent."

It was not an unwise step, for confirmation awaited him there that the man who had presented the check that morning early had been seen late the previous night in the neighborhood of Parklawn. In fact, at about nine o'clock on the night of the murder, a man of that description had hurriedly entered the railway station just as the London train was signaled; had demanded a ticket—first-class; had thrown down half a sovereign, hastily gathered up the change, and run off.

What kind of man was he?

As to features, the clerk could hardly say. A brown coat—he couldn't tell whether an ulster or not—was pulled up about the throat, a soft felt hat rested low on the brows, while a black beard and mustache covered the lower part of the countenance.

Yes, his manner was excited—agitated.

Yes, there was a peculiarity he had noticed, that his hands were white and shapely; that he wore on the small finger of the right hand a half-hoop emerald lady's ring; while on the left was a red mark like a blood-stain.

His eyes had rested upon it, which the man perceiving, he had, despite his haste, drawn back the hand, taking the change with the other.

Here, for a time, the evidence began and ended.

Mr. Moyle could obtain no further clew, but he held firmly by that.

"I've begun a case with less," he commented mentally. "This may take time, but I'm much mistaken if I don't run the fellow down at last."

Thus the question, "Who had killed Barry Lorrimore?" remained a mystery to every one, except Rosalind Acland.

To her there was no mystery; it was all too terribly clear.

George and Barry had met by the river, and this was the result.

At the first glance at the footman Erard's face, she felt that she had divined the truth.

There had been a quarrel.

His words told her how it had ended, and a swoon had come to her relief.

Oh, that awful coming to—the dull, heavy sense of weariness, the dazed longing for sleep—then the vague consciousness of a fearful dream—then the truth.

She was free from that marriage which had been hateful to her; but free at what a price!

To her, George Lorrimore could henceforth be nothing.

Pity him, sorrow for him, she might. Marry him, never!

She never doubted that the blow which must have killed Barry had been struck in passion, with no murderous intent—only in fierce anger. Yet the consequence was the same.

The agony that Rosalind suffered throughout that night none knew but herself.

The bitterest moments were when Matthew Lorrimore, coming, sympathized with her at the loss of Barry, and consoled her by the assurance that the assassin would surely be brought to justice—that a detective from Scotland Yard had already been sent for.

This awakened a fresh alarm in Rosalind.

Would any one besides herself suspect George Lorrimore?

That question aroused her.

Had not George Lorrimore promised to be at Parklawn on Friday evening?

Would he dare venture?

Why not?—even if only to learn what means had been taken to discover the man who had killed poor Barry.

On no account must he come. For his own sake; for hers.

Oh, no, no! She could not, she dared not meet him—at any rate, not yet.

Her brain swam, her hand grew cold at the thought.

There was but one way for her to proceed. She must write to him.

Had she not promised to do that?

She must warn him—must forbid him to come.

How difficult was that letter to write!

Rosalind made half a dozen attempts; starting, trembling at each sound, and carefully burning every failure.

Finally she penned it thus:

"Oh, the utter, the wretched misery of this day! I need give you no explanation of the fearful event of last night. Oh, George, George, how—but no, my lips shall remain mute. Better that we should never meet again. But for Heaven's love, for my sake, for your own, do not come near this place. I cannot, I dare not write more now!"

Then, as if actuated by a new thought, the following was added as a postscript:

"A detective from London is engaged to discover who—who killed poor Barry. The man who presented the check has been identified as one who left here by train last night for town. The police have hope that they are on his track. Oh, Heaven! this is awful. Would I could go mad and forget! The man they seek, they say, wore a lady's emerald ring on his finger."

"I have done it. Wrong or right, I cannot help it!" ejaculated Rosalind, dropping her fear-stained face on her hands, with a sob. "That will show that I know his sin, and it will also warn him, put him on his guard. I must do it. How could I do less? Would that he might fly. Yes, fly, that we may never, never again meet. Better not, better not!" and her tears flowed fast.

Yes; she wished that they might never meet more in this world.

Though she could never wed George Lorrimore, she pitied him, assured that the blow had been dealt unpremeditatedly, in anger. But how came he to rob his victim? How could he cash the check, and use money that was not his? She could feel for and pardon the wronged, jealous man, though red-handed, but could not forgive the thief.

CHAPTER V.

NOT GUILTY.

It was Friday, the second morning after the crime, which still formed the chief topic of conversation in the neighborhood.

The river, or that portion of it near the scene of the occurrence, had been dragged, but without result.

Groups of people perambulated the banks of the Thames, from morning to night. Some attracted by that morbid curiosity and interest so singularly present in mankind; others by the hope of discovering the body, for which a reward had been offered by Matthew Lorrimore. Dark, dirty-looking boats, with single

rowers, moved incessantly between Parklawn and the bridges—boats whose owners appeared to have a large amount of leisure time on their hands, but who were always awakened into energy and active life by a shadow under the banks, or a ripple, an eddy in the water.

Swiftly the dark, dirty boat would be made to dart toward these. The owner would gently prod the shadow or eddy with an oar leaning the while forward, peering into the depths; then, sinking back, pursue his sluggish course.

It was certain to all that the body must have been thrown into the Thames, but it could not be found.

Still, the time was short yet. As the detective had remarked, it might turn up somewhere between the bridges.

The uniform order of nature at no period strikes us more than when we ourselves are the bearers of some great grief.

Parklawn was already falling back into its old routine, after a fashion that was almost maddening to Rosalind. In Matthew Lorrimore, vindictiveness against the man who had balked him of the desire of his life dominated his affection for Barry. Save in one case, his power of love had never been largely developed. Perhaps that one case had absorbed it almost entirely. Certainly, his present ruling idea was to bring the criminal to justice—a desire he expressed in words that pierced each like a dagger-stab poor Rosalind's heart.

On that Friday morning she sat alone in the breakfast-room, her elbows on the davenport before her, her head on her hands. Her house-keeping book was on the desk. She, too, like the rest, had tried to sink back into the customary routine, but impossible. Her head was heavy, her brain dazed. Would it ever be clear again?

The glass doors were open, the warm sunlight fell on the small flower-beds outside. The breeze gently waved the lace curtains, and softly ruffled the papers on the davenport.

For half an hour Rosalind had never altered her position, the silence had remained unbroken, when footsteps sounded in the hall.

The next moment the door was opened, and the footman announced, "Mr. George Lorrimore!"

Rosalind rose up with a quick, low, startled cry; then stood as if of stone.

He here?

Yes; there he was before her, meeting her gaze sadly, firmly, or was it defiantly? Had he come to brave it out?

Instinctively her glance traveled to his hands; they were ungloved. Only one diamond and one signet ring were upon them.

"Good Heaven!" ejaculated Rosalind, in trembling tones; "why are you here? What—what madness brings you?"

"Why should I not be here?" was the calm reply. "I have come to have a mystery explained, Rosalind,"—approaching nearer. "I have come for a solution to this letter."

And he placed her own on the desk.

"Solution?" she murmured, shrinking away a little, her eyes drooping from his. "Is one necessary? Surely you know—"

"That," he put in, "on the same night I was here, my cousin Barry was mysteriously slain? Yes, I know it, as all the newspaper-reading public do by this time. But why should that hinder my coming here? Should it not rather bring me, for this is a family trouble shared by all? I repeat, Rosalind"—taking one step nearer again—"why should Barry's death prevent my coming to this house?"

She looked up hesitating, but could not yet, in her misery, her fear for him, meet his gaze.

As hers rested upon the dark beard and mustache, so dwelt upon by the cashier, the railway clerk and the detective himself, her heart turned sick.

She covered her face with her hands, and sobbed forth, almost with a cry, "Why ask me? If you cannot answer the question, why ask me?"

"Why?" he rejoined, a sad, stern expression

on his face. "Because of this letter. Rosalind,"—and, despite her efforts, he took her hands from her face, and held them in his own—"you shall look at me; you shall answer me. That letter implies that you hold me guilty of my cousin's death. Is it not so? Let your own lips confirm it."

Her face was averted; her bosom heaved with an agitation that was agony.

For a while she was silent. Then she raised her head, for the first time meeting his glance, and said, "And is it not so, George? Are you not Barry's destroyer?"

"I?" and he recoiled back. "Oh, that so base and foul an accusation should be pronounced by you, the woman I love—by you, and no other—"

"Because," she broke in, excitedly, and sorrow blending now with her former terror, "I alone know of your presence here that night; I alone know of the words of enmity you then expressed; I alone know that both you and Barry were down by the river at the same time! Oh, George—oh, my love!" she cried, piteously, "do not regard me thus! I know in your heart you are no assassin; I know there must have been a quarrel—that there was a fatal blow, which Barry might, had fate willed it, have struck instead of you! I—I cannot hold you all to blame; but the law—"

"I shall never fear to meet, Rosalind, for any sin this hand has perpetrated," he interrupted, coldly. "So upon this supposition you have condemned me? Your hand has branded my forehead with the mark of Cain! I thank you! I wonder that you ever could have loved a man whose character you so read."

He turned from her, hurt, suffering, cut to the heart.

"No, George!" she ejaculated; "not upon this supposition. The description given of—the suspected man—of the man who changed the check—was yours. Knowing you had provocation—knowing how all must have been done in passion—I wrote, I swear, not to accuse, but to warn."

"The man who changed the check!" he exclaimed, indignantly, as he once more confronted her. "Rosalind, had I been guilty of killing Barry through jealousy, do you think I could have robbed him too? If I had struck him down in my anger, do you imagine I would have fled like a coward, and not remained to own the truth, and told my provocation? I swear I never saw my cousin Barry that night!"

Rosalind had been watching every feature.

"George," she now ejaculated, with a low cry of joy, "is this true? No, no; do not answer! 'Tis sin of me to ask! I believe you. Can you ever forgive me the wrong I have done you?"

She seemed about to throw herself at his feet; but he prevented her by taking her in his arms.

"Rosalind," he said, "you were cruel to suspect me. But not to forgive you would be beyond me."

"Dear George!" she murmured through her tears.

"Then you no longer think me guilty?"

"How could I?" she answered. "I am sure you are not."

"In that case, Rosalind, I will prove my innocence to you, which, I own, I should have been too proud, too hurt, to have done before. The suspected man returned to town, it is affirmed, by train. I rowed back by water, but only as far as Kingston, where I landed, and passed the night and the next morning with the Beauchamps. So, dear, you perceive, my alibi would not be difficult to prove."

"Oh, George! I shall never forgive myself for wronging you so cruelly! My punishment would be a just one did you never pardon."

"Ah, darling!" he smiled, as he raised her white, contrite face from his shoulder and fondly kissed it; "you have a very lenient judge. I could not help loving you, and so cannot withhold my forgiveness."

"You are too good," she murmured.

"I fear, Rosalind, that we are both too selfish," he put in, gravely: "but that is a fault of love. We forget poor Barry. As I did not kill him, who did?"

"It must have been for robbery, as the detective said," remarked Rosalind, sitting on the chair to which George Lorrimore had led her. "It could not be enmity. Every one who knew Barry liked him. Somebody must have known of his possession of that check."

"I don't see how any person, save one of the servants, could have been aware of that."

"That's what Mr. Moyle thinks."

"Where is my uncle?" inquired George Lorrimore.

"I believe, after breakfast, he went to the library, dear," said Rosalind, yet holding her lover's hand as he stood near her. Pained at the wrong she now felt sure she had done him, she strove by all her fondest arts to make him forget. "Would you see him?"

"To do so is the second reason which brought me," was the answer. "At such a time as the present, all enmity and jealousy should be forgotten. I own I was jealous of Barry. But, poor fellow, none can grieve for his untimely death more than I do. I sorrow, too, keenly for my uncle. He liked my cousin, and must feel the mode of his death deeply. He is old, too; therefore I have come to offer him my services in seeing to the tracking of this villain."

"How good and generous of you, George!" murmured the girl, fondly leaning her cheek upon the hand she held.

Then she started up with an exclamation of alarm, suddenly becoming aware that Matthew Lorrimore was standing outside by the open glass door, watching her and his nephew. "Don't disturb yourselves," said the old man, hardly casting a glance at their confused faces as he entered. "I suppose you considered you had concealed your secret very well, but I have guessed it all along."

"Guessed it, uncle?" remarked George Lorrimore, speedily regaining self-possession. "Guessed that Rosalind and I loved, yet would have forced her union with another?"

"Exactly!" was the answer, as the speaker seated himself in an arm-chair. "Barry was my heir, and I desired that Rosalind should share the inheritance. Had you, George, thwarted my purpose, not another farthing should you have had from me. Had Rosalind done so, I should have closed my heart and my doors for ever against her. Had Barry refused, from that moment he and I would have been as strangers. But then," he added, "where is the use of talking now? Death has overthrown all my plans. You, George, are the only relation I have left; and—" he paused—"and I confess to having heard your words just before I entered. I believe I have wronged you. I have visited the sins of the father on the child! Shake hands. I heard you say you had come to offer me your services to aid in tracking poor Barry's destroyer. I accept them. More than this, if you find him—or when he is found—I promise to adopt you as my heir, and to consent to your union with Rosalind."

"Uncle," ejaculated George Lorrimore, pressing the old man's hand, overcome with delight, "do you really mean this? Can I—may I believe it?"

"Test me by finding this man of whom the law is in search."

"Trust me, sir," cried the young man. "I will not rest; I will not leave a stone unturned. Dear Rosalind, have you no word to speak?"

"What can I say?" she murmured, as she placed her arms round Matthew Lorrimore's neck, and kissed his cheek. "Uncle, my heart is too full for speech! Yes, I love George, though, for his sake, without your consent I would not have been his. You do consent. My happiness would now have been perfect but for the recollection of our poor Barry."

"At, indeed! Poor Barry! There only re-

mains to avenge him, Rosalind. Hark! Some one knocks. Who is it?"

It was the footman, with a telegram just arrived.

The sender was Mr. Moyle, the detective.

The contents, which were brief, ran as follows:

"Traced one of the bank notes paid by the cashier to our man. Fancy we are on the right track, and shall soon run him down. (Private.)"

CHAPTER VI.

CHARLES SOMERSET MAKES A SUDDEN RESOLVE.

LAURA SOMERSET was the very pattern of a fond, careful little wife. Charles Somerset, her husband, was not far from the truth when he averred that she would make one sovereign go as far as two. Certainly what their humble little home lacked in luxuries, Laura made up in taste, good-humor, and cheerful disposition.

She was, indeed, too proud of her home to consider it humble.

"Humble," she remarked, laughing, consulting the dictionary, "signifies 'low, meek, not high, not great.' Well, we are decidedly not high nor great; but neither are we low or meek. We have books, music, pictures, which we appreciate, and which afford us amusement. A millionaire couldn't have more, if as much—for he might lack the appreciation."

Laura treated her home as an artist treats a favorite picture. She was always touching it up, adding something here and something there.

There was, however, this difference: the artist does it to please himself, or for his own fame; Laura's sole idea was to please her husband. She had no thought of herself.

There was one piece of advice her mother—dead now long ago—had given her which she had never forgotten; though when reverses had come, and she had to go out into the world for a living, she had given up all thought of ever putting it in practice.

"When you are married, my dear," had said the old lady, rubbing her spectacles with her handkerchief, "always keep your brightest smiles, as your brightest coal or prettiest flowers, for when your husband comes home. Remember he is the bread-winner, and that's the least payment you can make. Don't, neither, be too proud to superintend your own kitchen. A man has often been driven from home by a badly-cooked dinner and ill-laid cloth."

"As if poor little I shall ever marry!" had half-laughed, half-sighed Laura, poring over her pupils' lessons in the school-room.

But fate had destined otherwise, and that it should be brought about in a rather romantic fashion—thus:

One afternoon, while governess in the Buchanan family, Laura had taken her small charges for a longer walk than usual, when they were overtaken by a severe thunderstorm. The rain threatened to drench the children to the skin; the lightning forbade the governess seeking the shelter of the trees. Worse yet; the two youngest tots began to cry.

There was only one thing to be done; that was to reach a farm-house half a mile distant.

Laura caught up the youngest, took the other by the hand, and bidding the rest run as fast as they could, proceeded quickly along the country road, which rapidly was taking the aspect of a river.

But Laura's burden was a heavy one, and she was out of breath before half the distance was accomplished. Her cheeks were flushed, a great pain was at her side.

"Oh, dear!" she gasped, unconsciously; "I can never do it. What tiresome children you are to cry! What will Lady Buchanan say when I take them home like drowned rats?"

"Pray let me help you. That youngster is far too heavy for you to carry, I am sure," said a pleasant voice by her side.

Glancing up, she beheld the good-looking features of Charles Somerset for the first time.

Her heart and temples had been beating too

violently for her to hear his steps coming after her. Now she could but articulate two or three broken words.

Charles Somerset did not wait for them. Nodding, with a smile, he said, "Never mind; you are out of breath. What wonder? Why, this little child is an infantine Daniel Lambert! It's all right; we'll manage it. There!"

It was right, and it was already managed.

Charles Somerset had whisked the child out of Laura's tired grasp, caught up the other under his arm, and said, "Now, if you will just rest your hand on my coat-sleeve we shall get on capitally. Please don't hesitate, or we shall get wet, after all."

Laura could but comply, and soon the little group were running along the road.

The farm being reached, of course Charles Somerset took shelter like the rest in the old farm-kitchen, where by his good temper he soon changed the children's tears to laughter.

Laura tried to play the sedate governess, but not with much success. She was of a merry nature herself, and the dimples would come playing about her pretty lips as she listened to Charlie's fun; dimples that made her face the prettiest, most lovable that Charles Somerset had ever beheld.

When the storm cleared, he saw the children and their governess back to the town, and took his leave. It was not to be, however, a long farewell.

The love affairs of some people run as smoothly as others do the reverse. Charles Somerset and Laura met again and again. In fact, by the most extraordinary occurrence, the little governess never went out but she was sure to see the well-set figure of the young fellow advancing down some lane, or seated on a stile, actually as if he had been expecting her.

The children, recalling that merry half-hour at the farm-house, always heralded the appearance of the stranger, who had introduced himself as Charles Somerset, with shouts of delight.

But though little brothers and sisters are very well to play propriety to an elder sister, they hardly act the same kind office to their governess, and Laura trembled at the thought of what tales they might, in their innocence, tell their mamma.

Though young, the governess was already well versed in the hard school of worldly knowledge. She knew that these meetings and pleasant chats might probably lose her her situation, which was a very good one.

Yet it was hard to give them up, these same little bits of warm, pleasant sunshine in the gray monotony of her life.

Again, on the other hand, even for her own sake she ought to check them. It was all very well for a handsome young man, with nothing to do, to care just to kill time by sauntering through the country lanes in the sunshine; but it was very different for her, who had a stupid, foolish little heart, that fluttered and beat beneath the warm light of his glances. Of course he did not seriously care for her; yet sometimes, though it was very absurd, Laura would whisper to herself, when seated in the dull school-room, her charges asleep, that she thought he did, just a tiny atom.

Yes; she must certainly put a stop to these meetings.

It required, however, a severe struggle, and Laura shed many tears in her own room, putting the necessity off from day to day.

Finally, however, plucking up a resolute spirit, taking her courage in both hands, she did what she considered her duty, as Lady Buchanan's governess. The next time she met Charles Somerset she said, with quite a matronly dignity, "Chance, Mr. Somerset, may do many curious things, but it cannot always occasion your meeting the children and me. I dare say you like children, and they are very pretty and good; but you are a gentleman—I am sure of that," with an earnestness she could not help—"and you see people will not put your meeting us so often to a liking for the children."

"They would be very stupid if they did," broke in Charles Somerset, with a laugh, that brought the blushes to Laura's cheek.

But she rejoined at once, rather distantly, "Then, Mr. Somerset, I must put it another way. They will say that *I* am the cause. The world is never generous. They—they may say it's my fault. It—it may reach Lady Buchanan's ears. I may be considered to blame. I—I may lose my situation. Then what shall I do?"

She had tried to maintain her dignity, but it would not do. Her lip trembled, her voice faltered, and her words ended with a sob.

"What!" ejaculated Charles Somerset. "How dare any one blame you? Miss Gray, surely *you* do not think I come here to meet the children, though I take your word for it that they are good little dears?"

"In that case, Mr. Somerset, you will perceive I am right to ask you not to meet us."

Oh, what an effort the words needed!

"You don't want to drive me away, do you?" he asked, in a tone that thrilled her, and a glance it required all her fortitude to meet.

"Yes, please," she murmured.

"Then," he responded, "I shall not go."

"Not go!" she repeated, rather nettled. "Then, Mr. Somerset, you are no gentleman, to refuse what I wish—to refuse to give up what is a little pleasure to you, but what may be a serious pain to me!"

He bent quickly toward her.

"Laura," he whispered, "do you mean this?" Then, "Miss Gray, I will promise not to meet you again with the good and pretty children, if you will grant me one interview alone."

Laura looked up, trembling. What was that strange light in his eyes? Did he—could he really mean that he loved her? Had those whisperings at her heart, which she had treated as absurd and refused to listen to, been actually true?

"What do you mean?" she murmured. "Why should I grant you an interview, Mr. Somerset?"

"Because, Laura, I love you."

It was true, then. Laura hardly knew how she did it, but she let Charles Somerset understand that she should be at church alone the next evening.

The young gentleman, of course, was there also, and somehow—either chance or the silvery smiles of the pew-opener may have accounted for it—got placed in Laura's pew.

This was Laura Gray's love romance, the result being that quiet marriage wherein the pew-opener was the bridemaid, and the clerk gave her away, and the ultimate renting of Daisy Bank Cottage.

Laura was at her brightest on this particular afternoon. The butterfly in the trim little garden did not flit quicker from flower to flower than she from place to place. The lark, in the blue sky above the cornfields, had hardly a clearer note.

Fresh flowers were in all the vases. Charlie's home-coat was laid ready in the tiny hall. Laura had on a clean holland dress, and a new blue ribbon around her throat.

And the reason of these preparations? Charlie was coming home—coming home, as he had declared he would, on this, the anniversary of their wedding-day.

For the tenth time Laura had flitted down to the garden gate, shading her eyes from the sun as she looked along the country road, before she saw her husband approaching.

She fancied he walked slowly, as if tired; but catching sight of her slim, pretty figure, his step quickened. He came on rapidly, a smile on his face, and soon was holding her to his heart, kissing the lips raised to his.

"Well, darling," he said; "here I am, you see!"

"Yes, you naughty boy, after being nearly a fortnight away, leaving me all by myself!"

"Unfortunately, Laura, my love, business is business," he answered, as, she leaning on his arm, they came together up the path. "I

was awfully sorry, I can assure you, and was glad enough to start again for home."

"I'm certain of it, Charlie. I blame business, not you, dear," she laughed. "You have, like a good boy, kept your promise, and are glad to get back. And I am very glad to have you back—very glad," she added, lifting her eyes, with a shadow suddenly in them, to his countenance; "for I don't think your trip, dear, has done you good; you look pale and worn, Charlie, as if you had been overworked—worried."

"Worried, Laura—yes; not overworked," he answered. "The business that took me was a troublesome affair—about some money that I had a right to, but had a difficulty in getting. However, thank Heaven, it's all over now!"

"I'm glad of that, Charlie. And you got the money?" asked Laura, halting, as they came under the rose and jasmine-covered veranda.

"Yes, dear. Here is proof," answered the husband, as he drew from a jeweler's paste-board box a pretty pair of gold ear-rings, each ornamented by two small emeralds. "Love, this is my wedding present."

"Oh," ejaculated Laura, clasping her hands; "how pretty! how elegant! But"—with sudden seriousness—"they must have been very expensive, Charlie. I—I don't think you ought, dear, to have bought them."

"A fellow can't help being extravagant once in a way," laughed her husband. "Especially when he gets the money he wanted, and has such a pretty little wife to say 'thank you' for them. Though, by the by, I don't think you have said 'thank you' yet. Perhaps you don't like them?"

"Not like them! Oh, Charlie, they are beautiful!" And putting her hands on his shoulders, she kissed him on both cheeks. "I am so—so much obliged; and after all,"—(laughing)—"you know, they are portable property."

"Then they please you, love?"

"Please me! How could it be otherwise? I now know, sir,"—and playfully she shook her finger at him,—"*why* you carried off my emerald ring. It was to match it."

"Was it really?" he smiled. "What a witch some one is! Well, have I succeeded?"

And he held out his right hand, on the small finger of which was an emerald half-hoop ring.

"Admirably. But now, sir," remarked Laura Somerset, jestingly, as she slipped the gem off his hand on to her own, "return your stolen property, and come to dinner. It's all ready, and I am sure you want some refreshment. How pale you look, Charlie! And with concern she gazed questioningly, anxiously, at him. "Tell me the truth; are you not well? I fear you are not."

"Well? Perfectly, you foolish little wife," he rejoined, gayly. "I am only tired, and while in London was a little worried."

"About what, dear?"

"Oh, about business affairs, of course, which you, love, would not understand," he answered, promptly. "But I repeat, it's all over now; and, darling, I trust nothing will ever take me so long from you again. I feel our real happiness may be dated from this day."

Kissing her, he added, merrily, "Now, Laura, just let me change my coat, and then in to dinner, or I expect it will be spoiled. And nothing ought to go wrong on the first anniversary of our wedding-day, at least."

"No, indeed. Let me help you, Charlie," she answered, assisting him to remove his outdoor coat.

As Laura pulled it off, a pocket-book dropped from the breast-pocket on to the floor, its clasp breaking open as it fell.

"Oh, Charlie, what a lot of notes!" cried the wife, in surprise, as she lifted it up.

A flush spread over the husband's forehead. Hastily he took the pocket-book from her.

"Did I not tell you, Laura, that the reason that took me to London was to recover money that was due? Having received it, it was no

use opening a banking account in London. Besides, I fancy we may need a great deal of it soon."

"May we, Charlie?"

"Yes; I've got to tell you about that," replied the husband, as he put away the pocket-book; "only for pity's sake, love, let us have dinner first."

The transient shadow on Charles Somerset's features had quite disappeared as he entered the small dining-room, and saw the dinner table, which Laura had so brightly and tastefully arranged with clean, snowy drapery and flowers for his coming.

Then having duly thanked the little wife for the cigar-case, her own work, which he found by his plate, the meal commenced.

As it proceeded, Charles Somerset's spirits seemed to rise. Laura had never seen him in so gay a humor.

He laughed and chatted incessantly, telling her of the places where he had been while in London, and the incidents which had marked his journey.

"Why, Charlie, I feel almost as if I had been in London myself," smiled Laura. "You bring me all the news. By the way, though, you haven't said a word of that mysterious crime by the Thames. They say everybody is talking about it."

"Crime!" repeated Charles Somerset, quickly, as he put down the glass he was raising to his lips.

"Yes, dear; surely you must have heard of it—the mysterious murder of a Mr.—Mr. Barry Lorrimore, at a place called, I think, Parklawn."

"How did you hear of it, Laura?" inquired her husband, whose face was bent over his plate, in the contents of which he appeared particularly interested. "I thought you never read a newspaper?"

"Neither do I, dear. It was old Mrs. Frumley, the charwoman, who told me."

"To listen to that perambulating retailer of morbid horrors, my love, I should consider as bad as reading the daily records of a police-court."

"I should not have listened to her, Charlie, only this case seemed so very sad. Only imagine! The poor young fellow was engaged, and had come down to arrange about his marriage with the lady he loved, when, going to smoke a cigar by the Thames, he was never seen or heard of again."

"Does that make out that he was assassinated, Laura?" asked her husband, still busy, apparently, with his knife and fork.

"Oh, I fear there can be small doubt, dear, about that, from what Mrs. Frumley says."

"Mrs. Frumley!" retorted Charles Somerset, with a short laugh. "She is good authority, certainly!"

"But, dear, she has read the case, you know."

"Some garbled account of it, probably. Laura, my love, you will exceedingly oblige me if you will not permit Mrs. Frumley to talk to you about such matters."

"Certainly, dear, as you wish it," she smiled. "She really told me no more than I have said, except that the police have a clew to the criminal, and are on his track."

"They always say that, even if they haven't the least suspicion," rejoined Charles Somerset, with another short laugh, as he pushed away his plate. "There! we've had enough of Mr. Barry Lorrimore for the present, Laura. He doesn't much concern us, I suppose. I've got something more important to speak to you about. Let us go into the garden while I smoke a cigar."

Laura could have no particular interest in Mr. Barry Lorrimore, consequently found no difficulty in dismissing him from her thoughts, as she passed, by her husband's side, from the room.

It was a lovely day. Light, fleecy clouds added to, rather than took from, the brilliancy of the blue sky. A soft golden haze hung over the horizon; the bees hummed above the per-

fumed flower-beds of the little cottage garden. Thoughtfully Charles Somerset paced awhile the tiny lawn, one arm round his wife's waist. Apparently, he found his subject not an easy one to begin.

"Well?" queried Laura, at last, glancing up. "You are quite in a brown study, Charlie."

"I was thinking, love, that we had been very happy at Daisy Bank."

"Happy!" cried the young wife, enthusiastically. "I don't fancy I knew happiness until I came here, Charlie. I love every corner of the place."

"That's it. I suppose"—taking the cigar from his mouth, and regarding the end of it—"it would be a great sorrow to you, Laura, to leave Daisy Bank?"

"Leave Daisy Bank!" she ejaculated, her eyes wide in surprise. Then, after a pause, she said, resolutely, "No, Charlie, if you desire to leave it—if it would be for your advantage. After all, the reason I have been happy at Daisy Bank is because you have been with me. I cannot take Daisy Bank with me; but I can always have you."

"What a dear pattern little wife I possess!" he smiled, fondly, stooping to press his lips to the glossy head near his shoulder. "Could I not make some sacrifice in return for such a love, I should be unworthy of it. But think, Laura—to quit all these flowers you have tended with such care!"

"Flowers grow elsewhere than at Daisy Bank, Charlie. But pray," she laughed, "to what is all this grave commencement to lead? Do Messrs. Jackson and Murray want you to live in town? If so, I shall cultivate a window garden, and be just as happy."

"I fancy, dear," he proceeded, "I am going to put your brave nature to a severer test than that. Laura, what would you say if—if I were to ask you to leave England—to go to Australia, and let us begin our new life in a new world?"

Australia! Her heart gave a little sickening throb at the word; her color changed; she was startled, and could but repeat the word,—"Australia!"

"Yes, love. I perceive I have frightened you. You would not like it?"

"Charlie, why do you ask? Do you wish to go? Would it be for your advantage?" she inquired, in a low tone.

"To our advantage, Laura, you should say," he corrected. "Yes, dear, I believe it would be. Imagine," he went on, with increased earnestness, "here, in the old country, so cruelly overstocked, I am offered a clerkship of two pounds a week! For how many years might I have to plod on with that pittance—having all the energy and vigor of my best days rendered useless, poring from morning to night over rows and rows of figures?"

"And in Australia?"

"In Australia"—and he threw up his head, his eyes sparkling with that energy to which he had referred—"I should find surely more congenial employment. There, a poor man need not toil his life out for a master's benefit; he may work for himself. There, a future is before him—a goal of rest, and affluence, and comfort for him to work for and obtain. It is only the idle who need fear. There, a man may feel pride and joy as his family increases around him, and not lay a sleepless, anxious head nightly on his pillow, tortured by the thought of how to provide for and do his duty to them whose sole support is on him."

Laura had watched her husband in earnest silence.

There was a new expression on his face—one to which until now she had been a stranger.

It seemed to her like what a prisoner's would be, who suddenly was, or had a prospect of being, released from chains that had prevented the free action of his limbs.

She saw in her young husband power, energy, purpose—a man who must rise if the means were but given him.

"Charlie," she cried, putting her arms round

his neck, "you are right. You are worthy something better than a clerkship. In the new world you would find and possess that something. Charlie, we will go to Australia."

"Laura, you mean this? You would leave England? You would give up—"

"What?" she smiled. "In the old country I have no relation, am without a friend. You remember, dear, the song which is your favorite—"

"The home is where the heart is,
Where'er its fond ones dwell."

We will go, Charlie, and our home shall be in the new land."

He drew her to him, gazing at her face fondly.

For a space, emotion prevented his utterance; then he said, in a low tone, "Laura, you are an angel! I am not worthy of you, my darling!"

"Because you are the least conceited, and truest, best, kindest-natured man in the world," she laughed. "But"—with pretty gravity—"let us, sir, discuss in a fitting spirit this serious undertaking. There! light that cigar, and begin. First of all, will it not be very expensive?"

"Yes, love; but I have the means. This is why the idea occurred to me. A man can't invest a hundred or so here to much advantage; there, it might be the nest-egg to a fortune."

"You, then, give up the clerkship?"

"With delight."

"And, Charlie, when would you start?"

"Would you be frightened," he smiled, "if I were to say as soon as possible—in a fortnight, for instance?"

She was, rather.

"It is early," she remarked, after a pause; "but if all can be arranged by then, why delay? In my opinion, Charlie, we had better spend as little money as possible here, so that we may have the more capital to start upon over there."

"Why, what a little business woman you are!" he exclaimed, with fond pride. "I repeat, Laura, you are the best, the bravest girl in the world, and a pattern to all wives."

So that first anniversary of their wedding-day was occupied by making arrangements for their emigration.

The idea produced quite a change in Charles Somerset. Never had he been in better spirits.

Laura, as she watched his animation, and listened to his bright hopes for the future, caught the infection, and before the evening was over, wished, laughing, that they had been going to start on the morrow, a fortnight seemed such a time to wait.

"Surely it's the best, the wisest thing I can do," Somerset reflected. "It was a desperate plan, but—a necessary. Without that money, ruin by this would have overtaken me; now it may lead to fortune. Heaven forgive me the wrong done! It was for her, my wife's sake. Could I see her poor, perhaps starving? Never!"

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE TRACK AT LAST.

If the morning brought reflection, it did not bring repentance to either Charles or Laura Somerset. It was not likely in the case of the former, whose eager desire was to place the ocean between himself and England.

In Laura's case, she had recognized this emigration to be for her husband's good, hence would never repent giving her consent.

Soon the bustle of preparation left no time for thought.

The few neighbors they had of course wondered at this hurried flitting, commenting, after the kindly fashion of neighbors, upon it.

To those who questioned Laura upon the matter, she answered as had been arranged by Charlie—that her husband had had an appointment offered him in New Zealand, and, having accepted it, his services were required without delay.

A fortnight was, indeed, a short time to

prepare for such an expedition; but the Somersets were not people to let the grass grow beneath their feet, while everything seemed to go in their favor.

They had so improved Daisy Bank that the landlord was not only quite willing to take it off their hands—certain that before the month was over he should let it at a far higher rent—but he also took their furniture at a valuation.

At the end of the week, Charles Somerset ran up to London, to secure berths in the *Saratoga*, A 1, Lloyd's, advertised to sail six days from that date.

Laura had proposed that both should remove up town, and make their purchases for the outfit there.

But her husband had decidedly negatived this, under the plea that London was so expensive, and that they ought to save every penny they could for their venture.

So he went alone, with a list of necessities to be procured, which he purchased and left packed at the outfitters', to be sent on board.

In two days he returned, excited, happy, triumphant.

"There, darling!" he had remarked. "If we had both gone, we should have been double the time. I couldn't allow you to rough it as I have been doing. I went to a hotel—if, by the way, it could be called one—close to the docks. I have superintended everything, and our berths are capital—quite jolly. Directly we can leave here we may go on board at once."

"That, then, will be in three days," said Laura, clapping her hands.

"And on the fourth, love, we shall have started for our new home," exclaimed the husband. "How I wish it were to-morrow!"

The last sentence was spoken with singular fervor. Indeed, during those three days a strange restlessness possessed Charles Somerset. It followed him even into his sleep, from which he would start up suddenly, broad awake. During the day he could not remain still; would turn sharply at the least sound, and was constantly complaining of the slow way the time passed.

The morning, however, of their departure finally arrived. The fly with the trunks was at the door, and Laura and her husband took their last look at Daisy Bank.

"Confess, dearest, after all," asked her husband, as they stood under the veranda, she holding a bouquet of her choicest flowers to ornament their new cabin, "you regret leaving the old home?"

"No, Charlie," she answered. "This going has proved to me that the love I thought I had for Daisy Bank was really my love for you. Having you, I find it impossible to regret anything."

"Thank Heaven, sweet wife!" he replied. "I'll build you up a better and happier home where we are going, trust me. Now we must be off, or we shall lose the train."

Laura did trust him. Yet, in that new land of which their hearts were so full, the greatest misery woman could surely experience was to fall upon the young wife.

Charles Somerset had timed their departure so that they might reach London at night. On drawing near the terminus, that nervous restlessness came on him more than ever. Attentively he scrutinized the passengers who entered the compartment they were in; almost furtively he glanced out of the carriage windows at the stations at which they stopped. When they neared their destination, remarking that he felt the night rather chilly, he turned his coat-collar about his ears.

Here they were at last. Here was the terminus with its many lights, its bewilderment of platforms to the uninitiated, its rushing throng of arrivals and departures, its provoking, calm, reticent porters, its clatter of cabs.

Charles Somerset alighting, placed Laura in one of the latter, while he saw to the luggage. The train had been a full one, and a delay in getting a porter the consequence. Finally,

however, the truck appeared, the luggage was transferred to the cab, all was ready.

"You're sure, my good fellow, that trunk is safe?" said Charles Somerset, stepping back to get a better view of the top of the vehicle.

As he did so, he came in contact with a fair-haired, respectable man, who was passing.

"I beg your pardon!" he exclaimed, apologetically.

"Granted, sir. There's no bones broke," was the good-humored response as the person went on.

"D'yer know who he is, sir?" asked the cabman, confidentially, jerking his thumb over his shoulder.

"No. Who?" said Charles Somerset, indifferently.

"Why, the famous Scotland Yard detective, Mr. Nathaniel Moyle, he is, sir. I knows him, yer see, havin' often druv him."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. They say as how he's engaged on that mysterious case at Parklawn. P'r'aps he's here about it now."

The listener quickly averted his face, not however, in the direction of Mr. Nathaniel Moyle. After a second's imperceptible hesitation, he remarked, as he got into the cab, "Very possibly. Now, my man, get over the ground as fast as you can. You shall not lose by it."

As the vehicle moved from the line, Charles Somerset, leaning forward, looked after the detective.

The latter was still sauntering along toward the booking office.

That night the Somersets slept on board, for the *Saratoga* would get out of dock during the early morning tide. When they were awakened by the rattling and confusion overhead, the ship was already in mid-stream.

Having breakfasted, they went on deck. There was much to interest the beholder—the teeming river, the fine ships.

Laura was delighted. Charles's attention appeared most engrossed by the little boats that kept darting out from the shore, especially when they neared the ship.

Soon Woolwich was passed; the training ships; then Southend, to the left; Sheerness, to the right; then out to sea, the land swiftly receding from view.

When it disappeared, a small dark line below the horizon, Charles Somerset drew a long breath of relief; but his spirits did not seem wholly to return until the last shore-boat, with the last batch of emigrants' letters, had left the ship at Plymouth, when, as the *Saratoga* shook out her sails for the Bay of Biscay, leaning over the side, the young husband muttered, too inaudible to be heard by Laura, standing near, taking a farewell glance also at her native shore, "Safe!—safe at last! On the other side of the world I may summon courage to—to—make a confession. Thank Heaven"—and he put his hand on Laura's, though his voice was mute—"we are off! I wonder if that fellow was really at the station about the Parklawn affair?"

Yes; Mr. Nathaniel Moyle was there respecting that mysterious case. As steady in his pursuit, and as certain as a sleuthhound, the detective had traced the bank-note to the man with the dark beard and lady's emerald ring. Also, after nearly a month's constant, untiring search, he had discovered the driver of a hansom cab, who remembered having driven a gentleman something of the description given, but not with a black, long beard, though he did wear an emerald ring, early one morning to the King's Cross Station.

Nathaniel Moyle instantly made that spot his field of action, and not without result. One of the booking-clerks, after some trouble, recalled that on that particular morning there had been few passengers; that one, a gentleman, had come in rather late, had put down a sovereign, the change out of which had been in such small coin that he had found it difficult to pick it up with his glove on; therefore, with an impatient exclamation, had plucked it off,

discovering a half-hoop emerald ring on his small finger.

Had this man a thick black beard and mustache?

No; from what the clerk could recollect, it was merely a mustache that he wore.

Where was this man going?

The clerk didn't remember; but he recollected the amount paid, which might be some clue; recollected it because of the bother of making it up in small silver, and the train near starting.

Clew! why this was almost everything to Mr. Nathaniel Moyle. He had the cabman's statement as to the time the train must have started. A reference to a "Bradshaw" showed what time that was; also that the price of the ticket could have carried the owner no further than fifty or sixty miles.

When Nathaniel Moyle discovered this, he believed that the capture of his man was but a matter of time. He had run him to earth, and had only to dig him out.

It proved, however, scarcely as easy as he had expected. Justice, jealous lest her arm should be escaped, had led him to the town itself outside of which was Daisy Bank; but Mr. Moyle could find no sign that he was on the right track, yet he had kept his eyes very wide open.

"It's not much use my staying longer," he reflected, as one afternoon he sauntered up the High Street. "If he really came here, it must have been a fly-away visit, and is off again; consequently, I'm losing valuable time. I've tried every inn, and the hotel, and it's certain my gentleman with the emerald ring didn't go to any of them."

Abruptly he halted, exclaiming, "Why ever didn't I think of that before? What a precious lob-lolliboy I am! I say, Moyle, my friend, I shall begin to think you're only fit for super-annuation!"

He had stopped in the High Street before a jeweler's shop, and now he entered the latter. The jeweler, a short, brisk little man, was behind the counter, polishing a tarnished electroplate fish-slice.

"What can I do for you, sir?" he asked of Mr. Moyle, eying him, and perhaps unconsciously pushing a tray of gem rings further out of reach.

"You may as well leave them rings where they are, sir," smiled Mr. Moyle, leaning carelessly over the glass counter, "for it's one of 'em I just want. That is, sir, if you happen to be fortunate enough to have a lady's half-hoop emerald ring among 'em."

"Certainly, sir; I'll see," responded the shopkeeper, "though I don't think I have. It isn't a very common style of ring."

The tray brought back was speedily overhauled by its master, Mr. Moyle displaying much indifference during the proceedings.

"You don't seem to have one, sir," he remarked.

"No, sir, I fear not. You see, sir, a half-hoop emerald isn't what would be much cared for. They generally want a diamond, a something to set 'em off. Wouldn't any other suit the lady, do you think?"

"I fear not. Ladies are so very particular when they take a fancy," answered Mr. Moyle. "It appears a strange fancy, too, from what you say, sir. P'r'aps you've never seen a half-hoop emerald ring, now?"

"Yes, I have—one; but only one."

"Sold it, p'r'aps?"

"No; it was brought me to repair. One of the emeralds was loose."

"Is that long back?" asked Mr. Moyle, quietly, his eyes, however, beginning to twinkle.

"About three months."

"The party was a customer?"

"No, not much of that."

"Now, as a particular favor, do you think, sir, you could tell me that party's name?" said Mr. Moyle, lowering his voice, and leaning forward over the counter confidentially, "and where I could put my hand on him?"

"I could!" exclaimed the jeweler, regarding

his interlocutor with surprise. "I always enter the name and address of persons who leave jewelry with me. But, sir, I don't tell them to anybody who chooses to ask."

"Quite right, sir. Bill Sykes, or Bob Soames, at times, might sometimes be very glad of that sort of information," smiled Mr. Moyle, not in the least put out. "But, with me, sir, it's quite a different matter. I'm Nathaniel Moyle, detective of Scotland Yard, and I think I want that party with the ring for an affair in London. Mind, sir, mum's the word; though I needn't say that, I know, to a gentleman of your intelligence."

"Bless me!" ejaculated the jeweler intensely interested. "Is that so?"

"It just is. Now, sir, as an Englishman and a Briton, can you help the ends of justice by giving me this here party's name and address?"

"Of course I can. In a minute, sir."

Going to the end of the shop, the jeweler brought back a day-book. Putting it on the counter, he ran his eyes and finger down the pages.

"Here it is," he exclaimed. "Stone fastened in half-hoop emerald ring—a shilling. Charles Somerset, Esq., Daisy Bank."

"Good!" ejaculated Mr. Moyle, buttoning up his coat for instant action. "The question now is, whether it's my man? Where, sir, may Daisy Bank be?"

At that juncture the door opened, and the detective made a sign for silence. The person who entered was a gentleman, who appeared in haste.

"Morning, Cutchly," he nodded to the jeweler. "Sorry to trouble you, but can you cash this? Want some change, and haven't brought enough with me."

While speaking, he threw a bank-note on the counter.

"Certainly, Mr. Jamieson, if I've sufficient gold. Banked all mine last night, you see. What's the amount?"

"Hullo, you, sir!" cried the new-comer, turning on Mr. Moyle, who, with a pounce like a hawk, had seized the note. "What do you mean by that?"

"Don't frighten yourself, sir," remarked the detective, coolly. "My profession is to catch thieves, not to make 'em. I'm a detective. Mr. Cutchly here will tell you so. I know the number of this note," returning it. "At present it's stopped; but, sir, you'll get your money all right. The only thing is, I want to know who you got it from?"

"From a Mr. Charles Somerset," responded the other. "There's his name on the back. I'm his landlord. He gave it me for his rent."

"Of Daisy Bank?"

"Exactly."

"Thanks; that's all I want to know," said Mr. Moyle, triumphantly. "He's the man I'm after. There's no mistake now. Please, gentlemen, not a word of this until I've nabbed him. I'm off to Daisy Bank."

"I reckon the nabbing him won't be so easy, sir," put in the other.

"Why not?" demanded Mr. Moyle, swinging sharply round on his heel.

"Because your man's given you the slip nearly a month ago. Mr. Somerset returned from London, said he'd got a good appointment in Australia, sold off everything, and left here with his wife a fortnight back."

"Then I'm done!" ejaculated Mr. Moyle, bringing one hand hard on the other. "Off with the proceeds of the robbery! He must be a knowing one, and no mistake. Still, Australia ain't out of the world. He can, and he shall, be brought back. Mr. Jamieson, will you favor me with a few moments' conversation? Can you give me the date of Mr. Somerset's departure; his appearance; the train he went by; in fact, any information will be acceptable."

Mr. Jamieson could, and was quite ready to do so. Mr. Moyle made careful notes, and an hour later was proceeding by express back to London.

Reaching the metropolis, he carried his news instantly to Parklawn.

Some slight change had taken place there since the reader's last visit.

Though the mysterious death of Barry Lorrimore hung, metaphorically, like a cloud over the family, his disappearance had produced more happiness than sorrow had the truth been confessed.

The fact of George Lorrimore now being his only nephew, and the energy, the interest the latter displayed in the pursuit of his cousin's destroyer, had drawn Matthew Lorrimore's affection to him.

Matthew insisted on his living at Parklawn, to be ready for any emergency; and thus thrown into each other's society, the young fellow's straightforward, honest disposition began to have weight, and Matthew Lorrimore owned to himself that in visiting the enmity borne to the father on the son, he had been greatly unjust.

In fact, he saw, for the first time, the chief wish of his life realized. Barry had, on the proposition that he should, as his uncle's heir, wed Rosalind Acland, being made to him, offered no opposition. He loved his uncle—loved Rosalind; yet, as time went on, had shown no haste for the marriage to be accomplished.

His visits to Parklawn had grown less frequent, and were for shorter periods. Matthew Lorrimore was always worried by a vague sense of uncertainty—like a hungry man who sits down to dine with the knowledge that among his masticators is one so tender, that once touched, it would instantly put an end to his appetite and enjoyment.

Now, however, the life at Parklawn was what he in his brightest hopes, had pictured it.

George Lorrimore, in attention and consideration, was rather as a son than a nephew.

Happy in the present, he had generously forgiven the past.

Rosalind's cheek once more bloomed with health; and, as the old man watched her, the child of his only love, so joyous in the unswerving, sincere affection of his nephew, he reflected with satisfaction, "This is happiness, indeed. This is what I desired. It was never like this with poor Barry. I was mistaken."

Perhaps it was this very sense of falling away in his partisanship for his once favorite, that made Matthew Lorrimore more inveterate against his assassin.

He had solemnly vowed to spare no expense in the endeavor to bring him to justice, and kept his word.

Thus, when Mr. Moyle had brought down the intelligence that "their man" had given them the slip and fled to Australia, Matthew Lorrimore did not hesitate in saying he must at once be followed and brought back.

They had been seated in the morning-room, when the detective was announced, and George Lorrimore remarked, on the conclusion of Mr. Moyle's news, "In Australia, when you are over there, I suspect he is not likely again to give you the slip."

"Not at all likely. He could only take to the bush, you see, sir; and from what I hear, he ain't the chap to do that. He seems a bit of a gentleman, and is married."

"His poor wife!" murmured Rosalind.

"Besides," proceeded Mr. Moyle, "he'll reckon that he's quite safe there, and fancy he won't be followed."

"A gentleman, and married!" said Matthew Lorrimore. "Whatever could have led him to the crime?"

"Robbery," put in the detective, decisively. "He wanted money sir—p'raps for this very journey—and somehow got scent of the check in your nephew's possession."

"How was that possible?"

"Why, sir, I hear your nephew was in debt. P'raps Mr. Somerset was a creditor, or a friend, or a confidant; and for some purpose—we can't tell as yet—followed him here that

night when there was a quarrel, and, I suspect, the weakest went under."

"That, indeed, is feasible," put in George Lorrimore. "But all is surmise—all must be so until the culprit is taken. Uncle, I was thinking, shall I go to Australia with Mr. Moyle? If I could be of any help, I would not delay a second."

"No, no!" ejaculated his uncle; while Rosalind cast a scared glance at her betrothed. "I've lost one nephew; I cannot risk losing the other. George, you are my right hand—I can't do without you, lad; while I'm sure Rosalind would never consent."

"And you'll excuse me saying, sir," put in Mr. Moyle, "I don't see what good it would serve. Rather the contrary. You, sir," to George, "don't know this Charles Somerset as well even as I do?"

"That's true."

"But none the less, sir, if he knew Mr. Barry, he may know you by sight; and if he should get a glimpse of your face over there"—meaning the Antipodes—"would know what was up at once. I fancy, sir, this case had better be left to me."

"I am sure of it, Mr. Moyle," acquiesced Matthew Lorrimore. "I intrust it entirely to you."

"And, Mr. Lorrimore, though I say it, sir," answered Mr. Moyle, rising and buttoning his coat, "I don't think you're trusting to a reed. It may want time, but I'll bring back my man."

"When do you start?"

"By the first ship that goes, sir, if it's even to-morrow. I sha'n't let the grass grow under my feet, take my word!"

"Very good. Bring the man back with you, so that the mystery surrounding Mr. Barry's death is cleared up, and, besides expenses, I will hand you a check for fifty pounds."

"Very good, sir; thank you," said Mr. Moyle, bowing himself out. "There's nothing like the promise of corn to make the mare go."

"Do you think, George, that man will succeed?" questioned Matthew Lorrimore.

"I feel sure of it, uncle," replied the nephew, while his eyes dwelt finally on Rosalind, the prize he was to win.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE AUSTRALIAN HOME—RUN DOWN.

"THE last lot, gentlemen. The very last; but the best. The most valuable section of land in the hundred of Sutton. Cultivate it, the earth is so rich, that the cereals thrive like Jack's beanstalk; use the grass for feeding, and your lambs will be as big as other people's sheep. There isn't—Thank you sir—no, there isn't such another section in all Australia. The man who buys it, buys a fortune. Those who live long enough will find land in Adelaide as valuable as it is now in the old country. Going, gentlemen. It's the last bid, and the best chance. Going, going, gone!"

"Capital!" exclaimed a stout man, dressed in broadcloth and a great quantity of jewelry. "Why, you seem cut out for an auctioneer, Somerset!"

"Do you think so?" laughed that personage, for he it was. "I didn't know you were back, Mr. Debenham."

"Got back early on purpose to see 'ow you was getting on as my proxy. You'll do. You've got the gift of the gab. Besides, you're a gentleman, and eddicated; p'raps there's something in that. Though I don't know. In the old country," proceeded the auctioneer, rolling an enormous cigar between his jeweled fingers, "I was only a barber—a cheap shave, you now. Thought I'd come here. Did so. Couldn't get any thing to do, so started a Cheap Jack, and now I count my income by hundreds—above a thou."

"You were fortunate," remarked Charles Somerset. "Also, you were persevering."

"I believe you. Worked on dry bread, and was glad when I could get a scrape of butter. Now I have my beef, pickles and

champagne. But since I've been listening to you, I've been thinking as how I needn't work quite so much. What's the good of a chap working out his life to make money he can't spend?"

"That's true, besides being generous," laughed Charles; "for it leaves an opening for those who can't get enough money for their wants."

"That's it. You're now my clerk; but there are heaps of fellows here who could be that, and couldn't be anything else. Now you can. You shall take the sales now and then, and of course I rise your salary."

"Indeed, you are very generous!" exclaimed the young man, really grateful. "At least, I am fortunate, Mr. Debenham, in having been employed by you."

"Fortunate for both. But there! we'll speak about it to-morrow. Dessay you're anxious to get off, and Mrs. D. will be waiting dinner for me. Good-by! We'll talk it over to-morrow."

Waving his hand, Debenham, a vulgar but good-hearted fellow, turned away, when Charles Somerset, finishing his work, sought his horse, saddled him, and rode from the town.

Charles Somerset looked none the worse for his hard work, nor the change of climate. He had been little more than six weeks in his new home; but his frame was more firmly set, his cheek was healthily bronzed. Care had no place on his handsome features.

About three miles from the town he came in sight of a small house, or cottage, its rooms all on the ground floor, surrounded by a small garden, and with a paddock behind encircled by gum-trees. The dwelling was hard and plain; the prettinesses and luxuries of the mother country were lacking. The place could not hold the smallest candle to Daisy Bank. Yet this was Charles Somerset's home, and he was as happy in it as he had ever been in his life.

At the door, watching for him as in the old times, was Laura—bright, fresh, smiling as ever, but no longer alone. In her arms she held a tiny piece of humanity, save a pink face and two crumpled fists, wrapped in white muslins and lace. Perhaps that accounted for the garden not having made the progress it might have otherwise done under Laura's care.

The young husband and father had dropped into a reverie, but at sight of that graceful figure, lighted up by the rich red glow of the setting sun, brought his horse into a quicker pace.

"How grateful I ought to be!" he murmured, half-aloud. "I have been very fortunate—fortunate in having such a wife—fortunate in having got that clerkship at Debenham's only a few days after landing. There is only that—that one thing"—(his brow clouded)—"to regret. I've delayed writing too long. I will write to-night. Well, love, here I am!" he exclaimed, as he flung himself off his horse at the gate, to which Laura had come. "How is the Great Mogul?"

And he leaned over the little pink face.

"Wonderfully well, and as full of mischief as a healthy baby should be," laughed Laura. "But aren't you rather late, Charlie?"

"Yes, rather. I've been on Debenham's rostrum to-day, knocking down I don't know how many lots of land—a knocking down, pet, which I hope will lead to my own rise. But there, go and get tea while I give Sultan his stable and a feed; then I'll tell you all."

That tea-time was more than usually pleasant. Charles Somerset related his prospects, and commented thereon.

"I'll work hard, dear—hard as an agricultural laborer," he remarked; "and we'll save. When we've enough, I shall buy a sheep station, and you see if I don't grow to be an awfully rich squatter, and the Great Mogul there shall be heir to untold wealth."

"I'm certain you'll get on, Charlie," said the wife, proudly; "you have such energy. Only I regret—"

"What, love? The mother country—its comforts, civilization, luxury?"

"Its civilization, toil, poverty, and struggles for existence? No, indeed," laughed Laura, shaking her head. "I regret, dear, you have to work so hard."

"Hard! Nonsense! Work is a pleasure here. There's muscle," laughed Charley, holding out his arm. "My love, work is play to the man whose internal mechanism is healthy and perfect. Then a man has a gold mine in himself. But I must be off, or the light will be gone."

Rising, he threw off his coat, and fetching spade and fork, was soon digging hard in the garden; for he was too poor to get any one else to cultivate the land.

Laura, having put the Great Mogul to sleep and to bed, came and joined her husband, stitching industriously at some mending.

But often Charlie Somerset would leave off, leaning on his spade, to ask her advice, or put a question, and she would feel joyful and proud as she looked upon him.

He indeed was handsome, with that bronzed, honest face, the hair tossed back, and the flowing, dark beard descending on the chest; his strong, well-knit frame attired only in trowsers, and the red Garibaldi shirt, confined round the waist by a belt, and open about the throat.

Then the sun set, and work had to be suspended. For a little while the young husband and wife paced the path, his arm around her, the soft breeze about them, until the stars and the beautiful Southern Cross shone out in the sky, and the occasional bark of the dingo was heard faintly in the distant bush, when they went in-doors, and as by mutual consent, his arm still about her, approached their child's cradle.

There was a brief silence; then Laura, clasping her husband's hand, murmured, tears in her eyes, "Charlie, darling, how happy we are! How grateful we ought to be! I hope—I hope we are!"

"I hope so, love," he answered. "As you say, we ought to be, for our happiness is great. Now, dear, light the candle, for I've got a long letter to write to England."

Laura instantly set the candle on the table, and placed the writing materials ready for her husband.

After which she drew the window curtain, had another peep at baby, then took her work-basket, and, seated opposite to Charlie, began to stitch away busily.

No one who could have looked into that plainly furnished room would have ever sneered at love in a cottage afterward.

Charles Somerset dipped his pen in the ink, but did little more. The letter he purposed to write seemed difficult to begin. His left elbow on the table, his head leaning on his left hand, his eyes were thoughtfully bent on his pen, which was tracing meaningless scrawls on the blotting paper.

Then he aroused, and his gaze, resting on his busy little wife, lapsed immediately into another reverie.

"Bless her!" he thought. "I'm in a confounded fix, that's true. But looking at Laura, I can't regret it. How pretty she is, and good. 'Pon my life, I sometimes think I ought to regard Jonas Moss as a benefactor instead of an enemy. I should feel content if we even were never to be richer than we are now."

At this moment Laura, becoming aware that the silence was only broken by the click of her own needle, looked up.

"How slowly you get on with your letter, Charley," she laughed. "Why, I declare, actually you have not even begun it! What a lazy fellow! I thought I did not hear your pen."

"It is not laziness, pet. The commencement of a letter is always the worst part. But there!" settling himself anew in his chair; "I will really now begin."

As he thus spoke, three men, mounted on horseback, rode up, and halted at the gate.

"Is this it?" inquired one.

"Yes; this is it," remarked the second, who, like the third, was attired in the costume of the mounted police. "Shall either of us come with you?"

"No; I think not," was the response, as the speaker dismounted. "Only be ready if I call. I don't fancy, though, we shall have much trouble."

Saying which, the man, opening the gate, walked up the path, feeling in his coat pocket as he went, from which a metallic click issued.

Even in that starlight the reader might have recognized in this man Mr. Nathaniel Moyle, detective of Scotland Yard. He had run down his man at last.

Knocking lightly at the door, he waited, standing in the shadow—keen, calm, on the alert. Had he been heard? Was he being inspected from any window? No; that was impossible. Ah! there was a light step; some one was coming at last. At the same moment the door was opened by Laura, smiling, unsuspecting.

"Can I see Mr. Charles Somerset?" inquired Mr. Moyle, politely lifting his hat. "I have a message for him."

"From Mr. Debenham?" asked Laura, innocently, noting the town style of the detective's dress.

"Yes, ma'am," was the prompt response. "Mr. Debenham."

"Step in, if you please."

Laura, closing the door, led the way into the simple sitting-room, where Charles Somerset, with writing materials in front of him, was waiting to learn who was their visitor before he commenced.

"A gentleman, dear, with a message from Mr. Debenham," said Laura, as an introduction. And the men were face to face.

"Mr. Charles Somerset, I believe," remarked Mr. Moyle, civilly.

"That is my name, sir," answered the young man. Then he rose to his feet. There was something in the face before him that seemed the foreboding of evil. "You come from—"

"England, Mr. Somerset," put in Mr. Moyle, taking a step forward, and bringing his hand out of his coat pocket. "Now, please, don't make a scene. I've help outside."

"What do you mean?" ejaculated Charles Somerset, stepping back, the color fading on his bronzed cheeks, his brows contracting.

"That, Mr. Charles Somerset, formerly of Daisy Bank, England, you must consider yourself my prisoner. I arrest you in her Majesty's name, charged with having slain Mr. Barry Lorrimore at Parklawn."

"Great Heaven!" cried the young man, his face pale, adding, in an undertone, "At last!"

Then he turned, for a piercing shriek rung through the room, and Laura threw herself on his bosom.

"You—you, Charlie!" she cried, with dilated eyes and quivering features. "It isn't true! What does this man mean? Why does he dare? It is madness!"

"It is madness, dearest," he answered, with much agitation, as he put his arms around her—"pure madness! Yet—yet, perhaps this man is not so much to blame. Laura, my darling—my wife—be brave—be my own courageous little woman! I have been fearing this. I—I ought to have warned you; but I—I lacked the courage which I pray you now to have!"

"You feared—you ought to have warned!" she gasped, raising her startled, frightened gaze. "Oh, Charlie, Charlie—you never, never did this deed!"

"Pardon me," put in Mr. Moyle, "but I shall have to take note of your words, Mr. Somerset."

"Thanks for the hint, sir," replied the young man; "but I do not fear. I guilty of this crime, dearest? As Heaven hears me, no!"

Mr. Moyle smiled quietly, and, as he caught his prisoner's glance, could not resist an intelligent wink.

"You doubt, sir," said the young man, calmly.

"So, I think, will the law, Mr. Somerset, until you can bring proofs."

"I can bring proofs."

Mr. Moyle expressed his satisfaction, evidently out of politeness.

"You disbelieve, sir?"

"No, Mr. Somerset; I do neither. I repeat, sir, I wait proof. That's the only thing the law and its officers recognize."

"Then, one of my proofs is," proceeded Charles Somerset, "that Barry Lorrimore was alive in London on the very night of his supposed death."

"You knew him, Mr. Somerset?" demanded Mr. Moyle, growing interested.

The other hesitated. He passed his hand downward over his face before he answered, simply, "Yes."

That hesitation destroyed the detective's dawning credence.

"You saw him?"

"Yes; I saw him."

"I'm glad for his family's sake," remarked Mr. Moyle, dryly; "I'm glad for his own. I repeat, though, as you must be aware, Mr. Somerset, being a gentleman of intelligence, you are my prisoner until you prove this."

"Oh, Charlie!" moaned Laura, clinging more closely to him.

"Hush, darling! Why, may I ask, has suspicion fallen on me?"

"Because you were first traced from Parklawn to London, where, Mr. Somerset, you cashed the check for six hundred pounds." (The husband felt his wife's hands clutch him more tightly.) "Because you were next traced to your cottage, Daisy Bank, and from there here."

"What clew had you that I was the man?"

"First, the notes you changed, and the one you paid Mr. Jamieson for your rent, were those you got from the bank; secondly, the man who was at Parklawn that night, and the tenant of Daisy Bank, Mr. Somerset, wore, on the little finger of his right hand, this ring." And abruptly, but gently, he touched that on Laura's. "I think, sir, I've proved my case."

"Oh, Charlie, Charlie," cried his wife, greatly alarmed, "what is this?"

He looked fondly, pityingly, at her, saying, "Would, darling, I could have saved you from this! But it was impossible. All that was done was for you. Listen, dear! I have asked you to be brave; I ask you now to believe in me. You know me; these people who accuse me do not; you do not know them; which, then, will you credit—these strangers' word or your husband's? I am innocent!"

Laura, drawing back, looked earnestly, fixedly, into his eyes. As she did so, the pretty face grew calm and resolute. The character of the features changed utterly.

"Charlie," she said, in a steady voice—"I do believe you. Whatever happens I will, I must. I could think myself guilty sooner than you. Fear for me no longer, darling! I will be brave as you desire; as"—and she glanced defiantly at the detective—"your innocence merits."

"Thanks, love," he said, embracing her. "Now, too, I can be brave for anything. I beg your pardon, Mr.—Mr.—"

"Moyle, sir."

"Mr. Moyle, for detaining you by a scene that can little interest you. I perceive you are impatient. In return, I will give you no trouble. But will you first, before I go with you, grant me a few moments in private?"

"Is there any need, Mr. Somerset?"

"I would give you proofs that I could not have killed Mr. Barry Lorrimore. Laura, love, leave us awhile."

Without hesitation, the wife obeyed; first, however, taking up the Great Mogul, and carrying him, perhaps for consolation, with her.

The private interview between the detective and his prisoner lasted about half an hour. Mr. Moyle listened quietly. His countenance was impenetrable—if it did show any sign it was incredulity, if not scorn.

"But do you mean me to believe this, sir?" he said, in conclusion.

"It is the truth," rejoined Charlie Somerset.

"I repeat, I can easily prove it."

"You must come to England for that, sir."

"Is that quite necessary? To me it would be, perhaps, ruin!"

"It's imperative. You don't fancy, Mr. Somerset, Mr. Matthew Lorrimore would be content with your stating, or even proving, this wild story to me?"

"It's awkward," said Charles Somerset, pacing the room.

"Very. But you see, Mr. Somerset, believe you or not, I must take you to England. You must be tried where the crime was committed."

"Well," said Charles, "I suppose I must submit."

"It would be wise if you took my advice, sir."

"I will," said the young man, resolutely. "And, in return, Mr. Moyle, trust me. I swear I will go quietly, giving you no trouble. As a favor, put away those," and he pointed to the handcuffs the detective held rather behind him.

"You swear this, sir?" asked the detective.

"By Heaven, and my honor as a gentleman!"

"Then, sir," said Mr. Moyle, after a moment's scrutiny of the man before him, "I'll trust you." And the handcuffs dropped back with an unpleasant click.

CHAPTER IX.

A STARTLING SURPRISE.

THE Brisbane, which a week later started on its homeward voyage, had Mr. Moyle and his prisoner on board, also Laura and her baby-boy.

It had been a severe blow, this arrest, coming in the midst of her happiness, but she trusted in her husband as she loved him.

He had said he was innocent of this crime, hence it would have needed his own confession to make her believe otherwise. Her beautiful face may, during that long journey, have been grave and thoughtful, but it never displayed grief or despair. For Charlie it ever had a sweet smile, as the lips a kind, wifely word.

Mr. Moyle, who was anything but a hard-hearted man, was touched by her brave fortitude, and made the journey as pleasant to the two as he was able.

"Now look here, Mr. Somerset," he remarked, when the ship was under way. "You gave me your word that you would give me no trouble, and I'm bound to confess you haven't. You've proved yourself a gentleman, and I can be grateful. If you nor your good lady—she's a prize, sir, she is—don't let out the position in which we stand to one another, I sha'n't. Nobody, then, will be the wiser, and we'll be the more comfortable."

"I thank you," said the prisoner, warmly grasping the detective's hand. "This is indeed a kindness, Mr. Moyle, and I deeply appreciate it."

So when the crew and passengers marked the two pacing the deck together, though they may have termed them "the inseparables," they never guessed that one had been arrested for a dreadful crime, and that the other was the man who was to deliver him to justice.

The passage was, owing to favorable winds, a rapid one. Nevertheless, it was dreary enough to the husband and wife. No news was more welcome than that which met the former when, coming one morning on deck, Mr. Moyle informed him they were in the Channel.

"Thank goodness!—at last!" was the response. "Do we touch at Plymouth?"

"For a brief space; just enough to send a boat on shore," replied the detective.

"That is enough. You have saved me from disgrace till now; pray continue to do so," said the prisoner, earnestly. "Will you do me the favor I asked? Will you send the telegram?"

"I will, sir. I promised; and though I ain't a gentleman, I can keep my word like one."

"You are a gentleman—one bearing Nature's stamp."

"Thank you, Mr. Somerset. I'll not forget that."

So the Brisbane went on its way, and the shores of England came in view. Once more the husband and wife, standing side by side, looked on them.

Then the bustling seaport of Plymouth appeared. The Brisbane for a space heaved to, and Mr. Moyle found means to dispatch the promised telegram.

Once again the steam was got up; the Australian ship pursued her course; the land dropped further into the horizon; and night settled down. There were many weary hours yet before port would be reached.

They, however, passed like the rest. The Brisbane, entering the Thames, glided up its broad bosom, and finally anchored in front of the docks.

For half an hour previously Mr. Moyle had been leaning over the side, watching anxiously every shore-boat that came near.

In a small cabin sat Laura with her husband, also seemingly waiting. There was a great change in the latter. He had discarded his rougher Australian garb, and was attired in the tweed suit he used to wear at Daisy Bank. The bronze hue had worn somewhat off his face, and the big black beard and mustache had vanished entirely. Mr. Debenham himself couldn't have made a cleaner shave.

At almost the same instant as the Brisbane dropped anchor a boat put off from the shore, and approached her. Mr. Moyle, by the aid of a telescope, inspected the single passenger.

"It's him!" he muttered. "He's come now for the proof."

Soon the passenger was on deck, returning the detective's greeting. It was George Lorrimore.

"So," he exclaimed, "you have, as you said you would, Mr. Moyle, brought back your prisoner, the man who slew my cousin!"

"That's as it may be, Mr. Lorrimore. My prisoner says your cousin was seen alive after that night; and that he can prove it, as you can, sir, yourself."

"I! Your telegram, by the way, stated that he knew me!" said the other.

"Exactly; and it's just to prove that sir, that I asked you to come here. Will you please follow, and we'll get it over."

Saying which, he descended the companion; George Lorrimore going after, curious, perplexed.

The prisoner was seated sideways at the table, his face fronting the door. A strange expression was on his features; it was neither doubt nor fear. Laura, with the Great Mogul, the most exemplary of quiet babies, sat on a sofa rather behind. Entering first, Mr. Moyle said, looking over his shoulder at his companion, "My prisoner, sir; there he is."

The young man strode quickly in, then sprung back as the other rose up, regarding him half-shyly, half-amused, from his chair.

"Great Heaven!" he cried. "Barry Lorrimore himself!"

"Exactly, my dear George," responded the prisoner. "Barry Lorrimore arrested for having barbarously slain himself!"

"I'm bewildered!" ejaculated his cousin. "It seems a dream! You are alive—you never were killed, Barry?"

"Never, my dear George."

"Then, you—you have been duping us all the while!"

"I confess to having raised the idea of my death by foul means, and to leaving my family under that impression."

"And why? Why this cruelty?"

"It was not a cruelty—nay, if what I have heard be correct, I fancy to you and Rosalind it has been a kindness," smiled Barry, meaningly.

George Lorrimore colored, smiling too.

"You are right," he said. "But the necessity for this deception—"

"Was, perhaps, an absurd, a cowardly, an over-sensitive idea; or whatever you may please to call it. The reason, however, I can give to no one, before I have told my uncle. As it is he whom I have most wronged, it is he to whom is due my first confession. Mr. Moyle," he added, "am I longer your prisoner?"

"Not exactly; as it appears that you were the dead man, and that you have never been dead at all, Mr. Somerset—I beg pardon—Mr. Lorrimore. At least," he laughed, "I can take the responsibility of letting you go on bail, sir, your surety being your own word. I heartily congratulate you, sir, and this brave lady, too; she bore up wonderful."

"Ah, Mr. Moyle," said Laura, pleasantly, "that night, after my husband's arrest, he told me how all this had come about."

"So he did me, ma'am; but, as a detective, I didn't believe him."

"This lady is—" queried George Lorrimore.

"My wife!" answered Barry, proudly, encircling her with his arm. "When you have heard all, George, you will congratulate me as I do you. Now, when may we go ashore? I am impatient to be at Parklawn."

"I think, Barry, I had better precede you, and break the news of your coming," said his cousin. "Your unexpected appearance might be too great a shock for our uncle."

"True!"

Thus it was arranged. George was to start at once; Barry was to follow within an hour.

"Uncle, all you can say in blame of my conduct will not equal what I say of it myself. Can you forgive me?"

Barry was the speaker. He stood leaning on a chair-back, confronting his uncle, who was seated in the dark, oak library.

"Forgive you, sir!" exclaimed Matthew Lorrimore, angrily—"forgive you for nearly breaking an old man's heart—an old man who had shown you nothing but kindness!"

The listener repressed a smile. His uncle's heart, he knew, was not of quite so brittle a material; while his kindness had been rather of the arbitrary patron description. Yet he had owed him much—very much; and it was in all truthful sincerity that he answered, "Uncle, it was that very kindness that led me to take the step I did. I was selfish enough, besides thinking it would to you be less pain, to wish you to mourn me as dead (a transient grief) rather than to have your affection taken from me—to offend you—to live under the bann of your anger—under the stigma of ingratitude."

"But why—why this?" broke in Matthew Lorrimore.

"Because, uncle, I could never have married Rosalind. I did not love her as a wife should be loved; while something whispered that, if she wedded me, it would not be from affection, but to pleasure you. I should never have her heart."

"You knew of her love for your cousin George?"

"No!" cried Barry, throwing quickly up his head. "Uncle, had I been aware of that, not the prospect of twice your fortune would have made me a party in forcing Rosalind to do violence to the purest feeling of woman. Had I known, I would have come forward, and, by my own act, whatever might have been the consequence, freed her."

"Then you have no objection to your cousin wedding her, and taking your place as my heir?"

"No objection whatever, uncle," smiled Barry. "I have learned the value of the healthy luxury of work. Forgive me the past, and leave to me the future. I am content."

Matthew Lorrimore's keen eyes gazed scrutinizingly at the frank, honest face. Then he said, "The cause of that past you have not told me yet."

"A woman, uncle—my present wife. I met her; I loved her. Her greatest fault was poverty; her greatest charm, her goodness. Not often does man come across such a prize. No wealth could have compensated me for the loss. Under the name by which I had introduced myself, I married her in secret. Almost at the same time you, justly angered by my coolness in fulfilling my promise to wed Rosalind, stopped my allowance, and I had to raise a loan. For a twelvemonth I managed to pull through. After that, the money-lender would no longer be appeased. I hadn't any money, in fact, to appease him. I was threatened with arrest. I thought of my young wife, and was desperate. I was ready to do, to risk anything for the woman I loved. I came up to town, and made a last appeal to Jonas Moss. I need not say to you, uncle, a man of the world, that the usurer was the more obdurate the less chance he saw that I had of settling his demand. I left him, promising payment within the week."

"How?"

"Ah! how? Now, uncle, comes the part of my life that must be forever a black stain. In my frenzied despair, I accused you as the cause of all my trouble. I said you had brought me up without a profession as your heir, then suddenly had flung me penniless on the world to starve—to go to the bad!"

Matthew Lorrimore winced.

"In fact, I got myself up to fever-heat, thinking of my dear little wife at home, and the letter your solicitor had sent me, until a plan came into my head. I would go down to Parklawn. I would pretend to yield to all your desires—mark me! I did all this, feeling, knowing I had not Rosalind's love; finally, I would borrow money of you to pay some debts, then mysteriously disappear, leaving an idea that I had been killed and robbed. Your generosity, sir—ah, you cannot tell how keen a reproach it was to me!—made my task easy. I would have liked to confess all. I was a coward, and dared not. I left you to smoke my cigar by the boat-house. I had made my preparations—the false beard and mustache, the means to make it appear that a death-struggle had taken place. I used them; and, uncle, to-day is the result."

He paused. There was silence. Finally, Matthew Lorrimore spoke.

"Yes; the result. George, my heir—you, a beggar!"

"Very well, uncle; but I hope with your forgiveness?"

"Of what value would that be?"

"To me as much as money is little," responded Barry. "Uncle, I have the power of work; I have energy. You know not how strong they become when used for a wife such as mine. Give me your affection; I ask no more. Uncle, put the question to yourself, a self-made man—which is the grandest, which the happiest, to bravely work and make a fortune for yourself, or to idly live upon that toiled for and made by another?"

"Barry!" exclaimed the old man, rising up; "come here."

The young man approached.

"Barry,"—and Matthew Lorrimore, taking his hand, looked at him with much emotion—"forgive you?—why, rather, do I love you so much?" And he fell on his nephew's neck. Then, after a few moments, "But where is your wife?" he exclaimed. "I must see her. She must be good and fair to look upon, for she, I am sure, is the sun that has germinated these seeds of manliness and good in you."

"You are right, uncle. A man without a pure woman's love is like a ship without a compass; he is almost certain to drift to the bad. Laura is staying at a hotel in the town. I will bring her, and—yes, uncle" (he laughed), "and our boy, the Great Mogul!"

Ten years have gone by since the mystery of Parklawn.

Matthew Lorrimore has paid the debt of nature, and George Lorrimore reigns, with his

wife Rosalind, master of the estate; for though the uncle had forgiven Barry, he had been just to his elder nephew.

The younger, however, was not allowed to return to Australia—to which both his and Laura's heart inclined—penniless. He went out the owner once again of three hundred a year.

The sheep run so coveted, became his; and when Matthew Lorrimore, dying, left him one out of the three thousand a year, Barry didn't want to take it.

At the end of those ten years he came over on a visit to the old country, and only a visit. His home, as his wife's and children's, is Australia. His energy has borne fruit, for he now counts his income by thousands, and is a Member of Parliament. He talks little, but does a great deal for the improvement of the colony.

The mother country is always loved, but never regretted. Indeed, Barry regrets—he declares, laughingly—no action in his life, nay, not even that dark hour, for he openly affirms that he did it with the best intent, and would reckon him as no man who would not do the same, and as readily renounce indolence and a fortune for the woman he loved.

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